

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE IN THE  
THOUGHT OF PLOTINUS

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THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE

IN

THE THOUGHT OF PLOTINUS

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## INTRODUCTION

Until relatively recent times Neoplatonism and the philosophy of Plotinus, the most illustrious of the Neoplatonists, have largely been neglected and considered to be irrelevant and of little importance in the development of western philosophical thought. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, there has been a marked increase in the number of studies undertaken in this area, although many do not appear in English. Now, belatedly, recognition is being given to the fact that Plotinus and Neoplatonism had a profound influence on philosophy in the west. Indeed it was in what is now called Neoplatonism that St. Augustine, the Mediaeval Philosopher and Early Church Father, found the answer to his intellectual search.<sup>1</sup> Platonism satisfied him intellectually, although it still left him in a quandary, unable to find the answer to his moral dilemma. Not until he embraced Christianity was he able to satisfy his moral search. For while there are significant and apparently irreconcilable differences between Christianity and the Philosophy of Plotinus there are marked similarities,<sup>2</sup> not the least of which is the vitally important role which love plays in each.

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1 St. Augustine, Confessions, Tr. F. J. Sheed, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1943, Book 7 XX and XXI, p. 152.

2 It is generally accepted, based on evidence from Porphyry's Life of Plotinus (Chapt. 16), that he was opposed to Christian doctrine.

Love is one of the greatest, if not the greatest, factor in man's life. Its influence is ever present whether man is expressly aware of it or not. No man can, with accuracy, claim to pass through life untouched by its power and might, nor with impunity try to ignore it, for love in one or other of its guises has its effect from the moment of birth to the moment of death and beyond. C. S. Lewis identified four loves which affect the development of the human individual, affection or parental love, friendship, erotic love, and charity or love for God. Should any one of these be lacking in a man's life he is stunted in his growth and development. Many have been the deeds of valour, heroism and selflessness which have been performed under the auspices of love. What but love of neighbour and God prompted Florence Nightingale to leave the comforts of home and country to labour in the wretched field hospitals of the Crimea, or Albert Schweitzer to leave his career and assured future for the discomforts and uncertainties of the African jungle? Surely there have been many great friendships through the course of history, such as that of David and Jonathan. Certainly, when we examine the great literature and works of art produced by man throughout his history we find that love is an ever recurring theme. All the great

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3     Lewis, C. S. The Four Loves. Collins Fontana Books; London and Glasgow, 1960.

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writers, artists and sculptors have, at some time in their careers, produced works whose central motif and theme was love. Many had love as their motivation. Had it not been for love we should probably not be able to read the magnificent works of Dante, Goethe, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It might be said that these represent erotic love only, and at first glance this may appear to be true but, on further reflection, it becomes increasingly clear that other loves are involved. There is much more involved in the love of man for woman than the merely erotic. All the loves are inextricably bound together and need each other for their development. Robert Browning loved Elizabeth Barrett on the basis of her writing before they ever met. Not only did Elizabeth Browning write her most memorable works around the theme of love but it was love which made it possible, which rescued her from the confines of her dismal London home and the life of an invalid and gave her the strength and courage to produce her works. It has been said of Michelangelo that all his works were created out of his love for God. Without this love there would have been no Pieta, David, or ceiling in the Sistine Chapel for us to marvel at and admire today. Similarly we can attribute to love of God what is probably the single, most often quoted piece of writing today, the letter on Love written by St. Paul<sup>4</sup> to the people at Corinth.

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4     1 Corinthians 13.

Although Plotinus is generally considered to be the first of the Neoplatonists,<sup>5</sup> there has been speculation<sup>6</sup> that he himself was unaware that he was anything but a true Platonist faithfully explicating the doctrine of his master Plato. Whether or not this is so, he certainly took much from Plato and, while he was frequently critical of other philosophers, including Aristotle, he rarely, if ever, criticized Plato. But, rather, taking Plato as his starting point he proceeded to interpret and explicate his (Plato's) teachings in his own inimitable fashion until the Plotinian doctrine evolved, bearing the decided stamp of Platonism, but, nevertheless, a new and unique philosophy.

The centrality of love and the vital role which it has in the thought of Plotinus has rarely, if ever, been given the recognition which it deserves. It seems unpopular in this "scientific age" to acknowledge the fact that love, usually relegated to a so called lower sphere of activity, can be a force of supreme importance in such an intellectual pursuit as philosophy. Nevertheless this is exactly what we find with Plotinus, for love or <sup>2/</sup> *ερω* has a role in every aspect of his thought. But

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5 A term coined to distinguish this group from the group called Middle Platonists and from Plato. Katz, Joseph. The Philosophy of Plotinus, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1950. pg. xi.

6 Ibid. Pg. xi and Dodds, E.R., The Ancient Concept of Progress, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1973, pg. 126.

then, Plotinus did not consider philosophy to be merely an intellectual exercise; in addition it constituted a way of life, which, if followed, would bring the greatest possible joy and blessing to man.

It is the intention of this paper to show the importance of love in the thought of Plotinus, to show that love permeates his thought and how, in the final analysis, it is only through love that man can achieve his ultimate goal.

When we examine the writings of the commentators on Plotinus, it seems that the majority put the stress on dialectic and reason as being of supreme importance to man in his search for salvation, rather than on love. But as we shall see, love is higher. This is not to say that dialectic is unimportant. On the contrary it has its own place, but love has the greater importance, for in addition to having a necessary part to play at every stage it takes over when reason and dialectic have reached their limit.

The treatment given to love ranges from virtually none at all in the case of Blumenthal<sup>7</sup> and Pistorius<sup>8</sup> to a quite considerable and detailed treatment by Rist.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Blumentahl, H.J., Plotinus Psychology, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1971.

8 Pistorius, Philippus. Villiers, Plotinus and Neoplatonism, Bowes and Bowes, Cambridge, 1952.

9 Rist, John M., Eros and Psyche. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1964.

Even some of the selections of translations do not contain the important sections where Plotinus speaks of love. In The Philosophy of Plotinus<sup>10</sup> Katz completely omits Ennead 3:5. "On love", and Ennead 6:8 sections 15 and 16 the noun  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  and the verb  $\lambda\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\omega$  are used<sup>11</sup> in reference to the One. In his introduction, however, he does make a passing reference to love, indicating that it does appear in the Divine Realm. But this in no way demonstrates the importance of love nor does it assist us in understanding the importance which it had for Plotinus. Similarly, Armstrong,<sup>12</sup> in his Plotinus, omits Ennead 3:5 from his selection of translations but does include the important passages at 6:8, 15 and 16. Even so, in his introduction, he does not discuss love and gives no indication that it has any particular significance in Plotinian thought. Although Miss Turnbull in The Essence of Plotinus<sup>13</sup> includes the above mentioned passages in her selections they are not there in their entirety. Especially the section in 8:16 is omitted where  $\lambda\upsilon\sigma\tau\epsilon\lambda\omega$  is used of the One. Here again no discussion of love is included in the introductory remarks, thus, even though some passages on love are included, no indication of its importance is given.

10 Katz, Joseph. op. cit.

11 Ibid., Pg. xxvii.

12 Armstrong, Arthur Hilary, Plotinus Collier Books, New York, 1962.

13 Turnbull, Grace H. The Essence of Plotinus. Oxford University Press, New York, 1934.

Perhaps some indication that love may have a certain importance is given by the fact that two writers, at least, have taken Ennead 3:5 as a basis for their work. Dillon<sup>14</sup> states that his purpose is to demonstrate "how far the philosophy of Plotinus in fact was from being a closed system" in order that one may more clearly see the links between Plotinus and the developments attributed to his pupils. Whether or not he was successful in this is outside the range of this enquiry. His purpose was not to discuss the importance of love and, as far as our purposes are concerned, beyond affirming the generally accepted view that ἐρως is a striving born of a deficiency and lack, as Dillon says "the upward striving of psyche"<sup>15</sup> we receive little help from this source. We get a much more positive and helpful picture from Wolters<sup>16</sup> in the introduction to his translation and detailed commentary on the Greek text of 3:5, where he goes much further in his discussion of ἐρως. After a discussion designed to refute the argument of Hadot and other commentators who claim that affective ἐρως, and sexual love in particular, is to be deplored and considered immoral and shameful by Plotinus, Wolters points out that "the ἀρχή

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14 Dillon, John. Enn III 5; Plotinus' Exegesis of the Symposium Myth, A 3(1969).

15 Ibid., pg. 36.

16. Wolters, Albert Marten, Plotinus on "Eros".



of the affection Eros is a deep seated longing for true beauty".<sup>17</sup> All loves are good provided they are triggered by a desire for true beauty. Affective eros is "the first step on the road to Intellect and beyond".<sup>18</sup> Although eros is the first step, we are not given any indication that it has a higher role than that of initial motivator for soul as it seeks to achieve its goal.

It might be argued that the first step is the hardest and most difficult step. This is open to question, for experience frequently shows that in many endeavours the last and final steps are the most hazardous and difficult steps to accomplish and those which require most determination, and often assistance, if the final goal is to be reached. As we shall see, love has its role at every stage along the way and particularly at the final step.

The majority of commentators who give any detailed treatment of <sup>21</sup>ἔρως take the stance that <sup>21</sup>ἔρως is none other than the appetitive Platonic <sup>21</sup>ἔρως which is ever desiring, ever seeking. This is the position taken by Nygren<sup>19</sup> in Agape and Eros in which he contrasts eros with Christian agape.<sup>20</sup> As he seeks to show conclusively that there can

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17 Ibid., ix.

18 Ibid., xi.

19 Nygren, Anders, Agape and Eros, Trans. Watson P., The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1953.

20 In Christian interpretation agape came to have nuances peculiar to Christianity.

be no relationship or similarity between the two he takes an extremely one sided and biased position. Although he recognises two levels of eros, a lower and a higher, he sees only one possible interpretation. Eros is love as desire, acquisitive love, an ego-centric love, always seeking. It is a love which passes away when the desired object is obtained.<sup>21</sup> Eros is the motivating force which sets man on his journey upwards, for it is man's way to the Divine. What Nygren fails to recognise, (or maybe he chooses not to) in his efforts to keep agape pure and free from the contamination of eros, is that there is a higher role for eros, one which takes it close to the notion of agape. For there is a context in Plotinus ~~where~~ where, far from being an appetitive desire, eros is a spontaneous overflow, a spontaneous giving.

Although he accepts the thesis that "love is an activity of the soul desiring the Good",<sup>22</sup> and thus that love is a seeking, a desiring, Inge states that "love becomes more and more important as we ascend further".<sup>23</sup> There is a higher love, detached from material things which is a relation between spirit and spirit, a unity in duality. Here we have an indication that there is another and higher role for  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which will give it importance beyond that of mere motivating force on the

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21 Nygren Anders, op. cit., pp. 175 and 176.

22 Inge, William Ralph, The Philosophy of Plotinus  
Vol II, Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London  
1948, pg. 188.

23 Ibid., pg. 188.

first stage of soul's journey. But having given the clue he doesn't make explicit what that higher role is except to say that the crowning satisfaction of that love and longing is the vision of the One.<sup>24</sup>

"Love is the universal force which prompts beings to seek their good."<sup>25</sup> Thus Brehier agrees that the Platonic eros has an important role as motivating force but in addition love has importance for the mystic. In the state of mystical union there is nothing in the soul but love.

"....the soul in a state of mystical contemplation is possessed by love and desire. The inner preparation, which has emptied the soul, has stripped it of every representation of the objects of its desire, but has not stripped it of its love. Love without an object then fills consciousness." 26

Here then we see again, as we saw in Inge, that love has importance in the gaining of that vision and union which is the ultimate goal of the soul.

The most sustained and comprehensive treatment of <sup>21</sup>ἐρως in Plotinus is given by Rist.<sup>27</sup> He attributes far more importance to <sup>21</sup>ἐρως than do any of the other commentators. Here it is seen not only as the motivating appetitive force but we also find the non-appetitive <sup>21</sup>ἐρως made explicit.

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24 Ibid., pg. 159.

25 Brehier, Emile, The Philosophy of Plotinus, Tr. Thomas J., University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1958.

26 Ibid., pg. 153.

27 Rist, John M. op. cit.

Admitting that Plotinus speaks most about appetitive  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ , for it is the motivation for the process of purification, Rist says that he (Plotinus) has refined it in the direction of  $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\eta$ .<sup>29</sup> The two contrary notions of  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ , that of simple desire and that akin to giving, are found in both Plato and Plotinus but in Plotinus the former can be transformed into the latter, the lower can be transformed into the higher. In the vision of the One desire becomes worship, joy, true love,  $\alpha\lambda\eta\theta\eta\varsigma$   $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ .<sup>30</sup> The non-appetitive  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  is made explicit in the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  of the One. This  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  is concerned with itself and must be non-appetitive, for the One is perfect by nature and without need; it cannot be upward moving for it has nowhere to go.<sup>31</sup> Rist goes on to show that this  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  of the One is almost equated with creative power, that the One's love of itself with its contemplation of itself must be the cause of the other hypostases.<sup>32</sup> He also, with Brehier, shows the importance of love for the mystic. Although there are times when dialectic can be put aside,  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  can never be discarded. It is the only quality in us which bears any resemblance to the One.<sup>33</sup> It is  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which facilitates the mystical union. The mystic is motivated by the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which is desire but

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29 Ibid., pg. 85.

30 Ibid., pg. 97.

31 Ibid., pg. 83.

32 Ibid., pg. 83.

33 Ibid., pg. 96.

in the end he must realize that the self must be abandoned. <sup>21</sup>ἔρως is the only element of personality in the One. When the mystic achieves union, <sup>22</sup>ἔρως is all that remains of his personality.<sup>34</sup> He is love.

In spite of the fact that importance has been attributed to love, particularly by Rist, the discussion, and consequently the importance, has been largely restricted to the realm of soul. Little has been said about the importance of love in intellect and philosophy. It now remains to substantiate our thesis "That love is of great importance in the thought of Plotinus".

In order to demonstrate this importance we must examine the thought of Plotinus in detail as he discusses the realm of phenomena and sense, the Divine Intellectual realm, and the One. In chapter one, starting with the realm of sense, we shall discuss philosophy, the philosopher, and the contemplative, showing as we do so the importance of philosophy and also that love has importance on two levels. It has importance for the philosopher, who must be a lover before he can become the philosopher, for only the man who has become the lover in the technical Platonic sense, who has come to a creative love, has developed his intellectual powers sufficiently and has the necessary discipline to practise dialectic, can become a philosopher. Thus love also has importance for philosophy,

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34 Ibid., pg. 104.

for dialectic and philosophy are almost synonymous for Plotinus. But then, at a higher level, we shall show that love has importance for the contemplative, as he awaits the mystical union, for without love that union could never take place. Additionally we shall see that love is instrumental in facilitating the transition from the lower realm of sense to the higher Divine realm. Finally in chapter one we shall discuss love itself and the two levels of love, the two Aphrodites, lower love and Divine Love, which are posited by Plotinus.

In chapter two the importance which we have already established for love will be further grounded as we discuss the Divine realm and explicate Plotinus's notions of soul and intellect. There we shall see that soul spans both realms and forms a bridge between the sense and Intellectual realms. We shall see that love again has importance, for soul in its generation of the universe and for  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , as the higher of its two powers. Love spans both realms, as does soul. As both realms are closely connected, so also chapters one and two will be closely connected.

In the final chapter we shall discuss the One, the Ultimate Reality of Plotinus. The importance of Love to Plotinian thought will once more be demonstrated and grounded, this time in the One. We shall see that from

the superabundant overflow of love, which the One is,,  
the other hypostases arise. But it is also through love  
that the mystical union is achieved and soul gains its  
goal and happiness.

## CHAPTER I

Philosophy, the Philosopher, the Contemplative, and Love

Philosophy, the Philosopher, and the Contemplative

ὥς δὲς εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἔνι ἑμβαίης

"You can't step into the same river twice" said Heraclitus in support of his theory that everything is in a state of change and flux, that nothing is eternal and enduring. One does not have to be a student of language to realize that this is equally true of languages for they also change and evolve. Words take on new meanings with the passage of time. Indeed passage of time is not even required. Often just a shift in geographical location is all that is required to give a word a new meaning.

"Philosophy" is no exception. Attributed to Pythagoras, φιλοσοφία, coming from two Greek words, φιλέω - to love, and σοφία - wisdom, means love of wisdom. But, since the days of Pythagoras and the original formulation of the word, it has taken on a variety of meanings or shades of meaning. To some people their philosophy has been a way of life finding its expression not only in their writings and teachings but also in the manner in which they lived. To others it was a mere mental exercise no doubt strenuous and occupying a lifetime, but otherwise



having little influence on the manner in which they conducted their lives. As was once observed about Hegel, he built a magnificent palace but lived in the dog-house. In short, to some their philosophy was a way of life but to others it was an occupation to be followed, like any other occupation, for the requisite number of hours per day but, other than that, it had no major influence on their life style. Today in our modern materialistic scientific age large sections of society consider philosophy and the study of philosophy to be useless if one wishes to attain happiness and the "Good Life". This may be true if the definition of the "Good Life" is the accumulation of possessions and property but many people who have achieved this so called "Good Life" attest to their own inner dissatisfaction and unrest. All their achievements which are great in the eyes of society leave them with a feeling of unfulfillment and inner emptiness. They have no satisfaction and happiness.

Whatever the verdict of modern society may be concerning the value of philosophy, to Plotinus it was of the greatest importance, one might even say it was vital, if one was to achieve happiness and the "Good Life". It will be our task in this chapter to demonstrate the importance of philosophy and the importance of love to philosophy, the philosopher, and the contemplative.

In Ennead 1:4 we find a discussion of happiness. For Plotinus, to achieve happiness was to achieve the perfect life. This consisted of transcending the realm of sense and sensation and entering the Divine Intellectual Realm to live there the life of reason and intellect. Plotinus says, "It is beyond doubt that man when he commands not merely the life of sensation but also Reason and Authentic Intellection, has realized the perfect life."<sup>1</sup> Such a man, having achieved the perfect life, has achieved happiness. The man who has achieved this perfect life lives a life of interiority for "....the means of happiness, the way to good are within, for nothing is good that lies outside him".<sup>2</sup> In other words, happiness consists in realizing one's identity with soul and intellect and living in the Divine Intellectual Realm. The Real man is Soul but this does not mean he should neglect the body which is bound to him. Since this body has life he must provide the needs of life for it but at the same time he is aware that he himself has transcended such things. "....what he gives to the lower he so gives as to leave his true life undiminished."<sup>3</sup> His true life, the perfect life, is the life of Intellect and Reason.

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1 1:4:4

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

This life of perfection is available not only to the gods but is also within human reach. In fact one would not even be human if one did not have at least the potential for it. The life of perfection is available to each and every human, there is no elite sect or group which has special dispensation. The perfect life is a life which is natural to the man who will realize his potentialities for, as Plotinus says, "....there exists no single human being that does not possess this thing either potentially or effectively; to possess it effectively is what we mean by happiness".<sup>4</sup> While there are some who possess this perfection only potentially, there are others who have already achieved it, who are "this perfection realized" who have "passed over into actual identification with it".<sup>5</sup>

When the perfect life is achieved then, the real man, soul, is identified with intellect and lives in the Divine Realm. But why does man have the potentiality to rise to the Divine Realm? The reason lies in the fact that part of the soul is divine and does not descend to this earthly realm, but remains eternally in the Divine Realm unmixed and uncontaminated ~~with body~~.

"The reasoning phase of soul, needing no bodily organ for its thinking but maintaining, in purity, its distinctive act that its thought may be uncontaminated

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

this we cannot err in placing, separate and not mingled into body, within the first Intellectual. We may not seek any point in space in which to seat it, it must be set outside of all space, its distinct quality, its separateness, its immateriality, demand that it be a thing alone, untouched by all of bodily order."<sup>6</sup>

The reasoning, intellectual part of soul remains unembodied in the Intellectual Realm thus enabling man to ascend to that Realm and eventually to achieve happiness, the realization that it is Intellect.

The importance of love and philosophy is first seen when we examine the manner in which the perfect life is to be achieved. The way is twofold and, although some are farther along the path than others due to their natures, we are told quite clearly that two stages are to be followed by everyone. "For all there are two stages of the path as they are making upwards or have already gained the upper sphere."<sup>7</sup> It is a "double discipline".<sup>8</sup> Two distinct sets of virtues are required. The "civic" or lower virtues are necessary in order that a moral being capable of living the life of a good man should emerge. But this is neither sufficient nor satisfying. The higher or intellectual virtues are required if the perfect life of intellection is to be achieved.

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6 5:1:10

7 1:3:1

8 5:1:1

Purification is the first stage and will produce the lower virtues. The soul must be freed from all encumbrances and affections of the body "declaring the dishonour of the objects which the soul holds here in honour".<sup>9</sup> No longer weighed down by bodily affections the soul will be free to turn inwards to the Divine Realm and realize its identity with Intellectual Principle. The second stage "teaches or recalls to the soul its race and worth".<sup>10</sup> It must traverse the Divine Realm to "the topmost peak of the Intellectual Realm",<sup>11</sup> until, the second stage completed, the goal of the Perfect Life has been reached.

The account of the pathway given in Ennead 1:3:2 is very reminiscent of that given by Socrates in Plato's Symposium. Love or *ἔρως* has importance in two ways. It is the initial motivating force which starts the soul on its quest and it is love which keeps it on the pathway, sustaining it in its long and arduous search for the perfect life. Without love the journey would never begin. Starting from a sight of beauty which stirs the memory and produces love and desire for beauty, the soul is led by a process of mental discipline through the range of beauties from physical, concrete material beauties to the

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9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 1:3:1

abstract beauties of art, sciences, institutions and virtues, always driven onward by the eros which is love and desire for beauty. It is made to discern the one principle underlying all. From the virtues the soul must be led to the higher virtues and Intellectual Principle.<sup>12</sup> Mathematics, *Τὰ μαθηματικά*, produces facility in abstract thought and gives "faith in the unembodied".<sup>13</sup> Once the soul is skilled in abstract thought, philosophy, love of wisdom, takes over. It is philosophy alone which can take the soul into the Divine Realm and propel the soul to the topmost peak. Again we see the importance of love. It is the love or desire for wisdom which keeps the soul on its quest. "Philosophy is the supremely precious" and "Dialectic is the precious part of Philosophy".<sup>14</sup> By the practise of dialectic the soul makes the transition from the realm of sense to the Intellectual Realm. Dialectic pastures the Soul in the 'Meadows of Truth'<sup>15</sup> until it has traversed the whole Intellectual Realm and attained the perfect life of Union with Intellectual Principle. Its task completed it comes to rest in tranquility and hereafter engages in contemplation. The Soul is now unified with itself and *νοῦς*.

The clear principles of dialectic are available to any soul able to receive them. Once received they are used until the Soul arrives at perfect intellection.

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12 1:3:3

13 1:3:3

14 1:3:5

15 1:3:4

Dialectic is the most precious part of philosophy and the most pure part of intelligence and wisdom. "For it (dialectic) is, he (Plato) says, "the most pure part of intelligence and wisdom."<sup>16</sup> But philosophy is the most precious and has other parts. Although dialectic is its precious part, philosophy is cautioned not to consider dialectic as a mere tool to be used. On the contrary it has its own activity and what it perceives it perceives by directing the intuitions. Natural philosophy and moral philosophy draw on dialectic "much as other studies and crafts use arithmetic".<sup>17</sup> The Soul is able to generate from itself the discipline from which the moral state develops but in the later stages needs dialectic in order to perfect the virtues to the point of wisdom. This is the special virtue induced by dialectic. The lower virtues can exist in an imperfect and incomplete way without the higher virtues but not the higher without the lower. Either the lower precede the higher or the two develop together so that they increase and become perfect together. Dialectic is needed then not only to induce the higher virtues but also to perfect the lower. The two, perfected together, give the perfection which is the virtue of wisdom.

We see then that love or eros has importance in two ways in both the Sense and the Intellectual Realms.

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16 1:3:5

17 Ibid.

It is love and desire for beauty in the Sense Realm which provides the initial motivation for the soul to start its journey and it is love and desire for beauty which keep it on the path, keep it questing, driving it ever upwards to its goal. Love operates in the Intellectual Realm as it does in the lower realm, for it is love and desire for Wisdom which sustains Soul in its practise of dialectic, as it seeks to perfect its wisdom and attain the perfect life, and it is love, love of wisdom, which initiates the soul into the Intellectual Realm.

By definition love is important to philosophy. Without love philosophy would not exist, for philosophy is love of wisdom. But in reference to philosophy and the philosopher love takes on a special technical meaning. In this context philosophy for Plotinus comes to mean dialectic and love in its special Platonic sense has importance for dialectic. As we find in the Symposium, only those men who through a progression of loves have disengaged themselves from the affections of the body and senses and thus become lovers in the true Platonic sense have the necessary detachment, creative love, and discipline to practise dialectic. This is equally true for Plotinus.<sup>18</sup> It is imperative to become a lover in the strict Platonic sense in order to become a philosopher

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18 See pg. 25 ff.



and to have the necessary intellectual and disciplinal development to be able to continue on the upward path and practise dialectic. Thus once again we see the importance of love to the philosopher and philosophy, for dialectic is the precious part of philosophy. Without philosophy the soul could not make the transition from the realm of sense to the Intellectual realm. It is dialectic which forms the bridge that transports the soul from the lower realm to the Divine realm and once there it is the practise of dialectic which takes the soul to the topmost peak of that realm. Thus we might say that love has a triple importance for it is motivator and sustainer to soul in its search for happiness but additionally and more importantly we find that this perfect life is available only to the philosopher, the one who has become the Platonic lover and practicer of dialectic.

Although Plotinus maintained that all men have the potential for the perfect life and the ultimate goal, he acknowledges that these will be attained by a few only. By far the greater majority of men are so bound up with bodily, earthly and material considerations that they never get "off the ground" so to speak, but nevertheless the door is never closed to them. The way is long and difficult, more so for some than others, but it is

never barred provided one has the necessary determination and discipline. With this in mind Plotinus identified three types who were most likely to succeed, the musician, the lover and the philosopher. Of these three the musician is the one most in need of help. Starting with his natural tendencies and abilities for harmony and rhythm, he must be led to attain the degree of a lover, a lover of beauty; "he must be led to the Beauty that manifests itself through these forms".<sup>19</sup> Once having attained the degree of lover he may remain there and and progress no farther or may proceed along the path. The man who already has the degree of lover, the born lover, merely needs the sight of a beautiful object to give him a remembrance of beauty he once knew and to start him on his journey beginning with the purifications. But the philosopher is the one most likely to achieve the perfect life. He already is the lover, the lover of wisdom. His very name indicates this and further evidence for this notion comes in 1:3:3 where we are told he already has that nature or character.

"The philosopher, equipped by that very character, winged already and not, like those others, in need of disengagement, stirring of himself towards the supernal but doubting of the way, needs only a guide. He must be shown, then, and set free, willing by his very temperament and long practised in freedom." 20

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19 1:3:1

20 1:3:3

The philosopher then, already is a lover, he has the lower virtues already. He needs no outside guidance to become a moral character. His soul is already disengaged and his direction is inwards and upwards. A further statement telling us that the philosopher is a lover is made in Ennead 5:9:2 where, speaking of the Intellectual Principle and the Authentic Existence, Plotinus asks "What is this other place and how is it accessible?". The answer is, "It is to be reached by those who, born with the nature of the lover, are also authentically philosophic by inherent temper".<sup>21</sup> The lover/philosopher then is the one with the greatest propensity for achieving perfection and the perfect life of intellection. Again we see the importance of love. It is important to the philosopher for he must be a lover before he can be a philosopher, and also by definition he must be a lover, a lover of wisdom for this is what "philosopher" means.

The perfection which is the virtue of wisdom, brings with it the perfect life of Intellection, union with  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . Philosophy, giving full rein to its most precious part, dialectic, brings the lover/philosopher to the virtue of wisdom, to the highest peak, the perfect life. There he rests tranquilly in contemplation, contemplation of the One. But this is not the ultimate, it is not the final goal. Once having attained the perfect life the philosopher

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21 5:9:2

becomes the contemplative and he realizes that there is something higher. He has achieved the perfect life of Intellection but this is not the ultimate. The final goal is not the life of perfect intellection, no matter how good it may be. The ultimate goal is union with the One, even if only for a fleeting moment. Philosophy has brought the soul as far as it may, as far as effort and willing **can**. It is even warned that in its strivings it should not attribute qualities to the One.

"Thus we rob it of its very being as the Absolute Good, if we ascribe anything to it, existence, or intellect, or goodness .....philosophy must guard against attaching to the Supreme what is later and lower; moving above all that order it is the cause and source of all of these, and so is none of them." 22

Union with the One does not come with willing and striving. Once the perfect life is reached and the philosopher becomes the contemplative after having fitted himself he must wait.

"We must not run after it but fit ourselves for the vision and then wait tranquilly for its appearance as the eye waits on the rising sun .... " 23

Here we could raise the objection that to speak of the perfect life which does not include the ultimate goal is incongruous and contradictory. How can a life be perfect if the final goal is not included? In answer we should remember that the One cannot be properly

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22 5:5:13

23 5:5:8

considered as 'in life'. We have seen <sup>22</sup> that Plotinus tells us that attributes, even those of existence, intellect, or goodness, should not be attached to it. The One transcends everything.<sup>24</sup> This includes transcending life even and thus puts the One "outside life", beyond life.<sup>25</sup> In order to achieve this final goal, union with the One, the philosopher must also transcend life, his life. Although still a living being when union occurs he will, in a sense, be outside life in the ecstasy of the union. By conceiving of union with the One in this manner we can preserve the validity of the perfection of the Intellectual Life for it is the highest which can be reached without transcending life. We get further support for this notion from Plotinus himself. In several places he maintains that the One is unknowable.<sup>26</sup> The Authentic Intellectual life is perfect but even perfect intellection cannot expect to know the unknowable. To achieve the Final Goal, Union with the One, one must "step outside life" even the perfect life, and, while still alive, transcend life. With these considerations in mind, then, it is quite logical to maintain that the life of Authentic Intellection is the perfect life even though it does not include the final and ultimate goal.

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24 cf chapter 3.

25 6:7:35

26 6:7:37; 6:9:4; 5:5:6.

But what will effect this union with the One which Plotinus insists is possible and which he himself experienced? The only possible answer is love but it will be love with a changed character. We have seen the importance of love, <sup>21</sup>ἔρως, to the philosopher and philosophy. This is the <sup>21</sup>ἔρως of seeking, searching, and desire. Once the philosopher has reached the perfect life and become the contemplative he can no longer search and pursue, indeed he must not. He is aware that there is something more, something higher and he longs for it but he must wait; the love must change its character, rest tranquilly and wait for the vision. It is this quiet restful <sup>x</sup>ἔρως which will effect the union when the vision of the One appears. In the mystical union the <sup>x</sup>ἔρως becomes a joy, a reverence, even worship "...he that has known must love and reverence It as very Beauty; he will be flooded with awe and gladness, stricken by a salutary terror;"<sup>27</sup> Once the vision fades he will long for its reappearance but, despising all his previous loves, he must wait tranquilly for the vision to appear once more. Love, then, is of utmost importance to the contemplative as it is to philosophy and the philosopher but it is a love, an <sup>21</sup>ἔρως, which has changed its character from a restless, driving search and seeking to a quiet tranquil patient restful love. This is the <sup>21</sup>ἔρως with the necessary efficacy to effect the ultimate Union.

## Love

Now that we have seen the importance of love to philosophy, the philosopher and the contemplative, we must focus our attention on  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  itself. When the name "eros" is first mentioned the picture which most commonly comes to mind is the Platonic notion in which  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  is a self-seeking, restless desire and pursuit in order to possess the object of the love. This notion of  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  is, of course, to be found in Plotinian thought. This is the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which provides the initial motivation and which sustains the philosopher in his search for the perfect life. But Plotinus has another notion of  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ , a refined transformed  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which no longer searches and pursues but which tranquilly and patiently rests and waits and contemplates. We must now examine the writings of Plotinus to find evidence for this higher transformed  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ .

The longest and most sustained treatment of love given by Plotinus is in Ennead 3:5 but this is by no means the only place where love is discussed or mentioned. References to love appear throughout the Enneads and this is not surprising as it is a key concept in the thought of Plotinus. Here in 3:5 as he investigates the nature and origin of love he utilizes the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  myths of Plato's Symposium and Phaedrus and seeks to harmonize the two.

Let us ask the same question as Plotinus asked:  
 "Is love a God, a spirit or an affection of the soul, or  
 is one kind a god or a spirit and another also an  
 affection and what kind of God or spirit or affection  
 is each of these?"<sup>28</sup>

The treatment of love as an affection of the soul  
 is found in Ennead 3:5:1. Plotinus identifies an  
 hierarchy of loves all of which are a desire to possess  
 beauty in some form. There are two levels of desire, the  
 higher chaste love and the one of a less elevated kind,  
 but both have their origin in a longing for beauty.  
 This affection in the soul can take various directions  
 but all are considered good provided they have the correct  
 motivation and are not a self-seeking desire to satisfy  
 baser instincts. Contrary to what is sometimes thought  
 Plotinus did not condemn sexual love. The desire for  
 procreation is a desire "to bring forth in beauty"<sup>29</sup> or  
 a desire for perpetuity, to be "immortal as far as a  
 mortal may!"<sup>30</sup> Even aberrant love has its beginnings in  
 love of beauty but somewhere along the way has deviated  
 from the right path. The pure love seeks beauty for  
 beauty's sake and naturally the pure chaste love is the  
 highest. But even here there is a distinction, the love

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28 3:5:1

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.



which recalls the archetype and venerates the higher beauty is the more noble and yet at the same time it respects earthly beauty; "...those who have recollected the archetype venerate that higher beauty too, and do not treat this earthly beauty either with disrespect".<sup>31</sup>

There is one aspect of love then, which is an affection of the soul and which motivates the soul to seek beauty.

In his account of Love, the God, Plotinus clearly distinguishes two levels of love following the two mythical stories of his birth. The one following the Symposium myth describes ἔρως as a mixed love. As child of πενία, poverty and want, he is ever in need but, as son of πλοῦς, wealth, he pursues the good and the beautiful with courage and audacity. This lower ἔρως has a dual nature, he is at once a need and longing which seeks fulfillment and a noble aspiration for the good and beautiful. In the other account which follows the Phaedrus myth, ἔρως is said to be the "Son of Aphrodite", guardian of beautiful boys, mover of the soul towards beauty of the higher world and is also said to increase the impulse towards that world which is already there.<sup>32</sup> This is the higher love which, born of Aphrodite and the result of her activity, exists in the Divine Realm of Intellect.

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31 Ibid.

32 3:5:2

"Now since Aphrodite follows upon Kronos - or, if you like, the father of Kronos, Heaven - she directed her activity towards him and felt affinity with him, and filled with passionate love for him brought forth Love, and with this child of hers she looks towards him; her activity has made a real substance, and the two of them look on high, the mother who bore him and the beautiful Love who has come into existence as a reality always ordered towards something else beautiful and having its being in this, that it is a kind of intermediary between desiring and desired." 33

In his interpretation of the myth in 3:5:2 and 3 Plotinus equates Kronos with Intellect and Aphrodite with Soul.<sup>34</sup> Thus he explains we have a divine and beautiful love, which is a substantial reality of unmixed parentage, brought into being by the activity of the pure higher soul. This activity, which is described as a "looking with great intensity"<sup>35</sup> and later "contemplation",<sup>36</sup> is accompanied by passionate love towards intellect. Higher soul which produces this love is separate, although it is always in the Divine Realm. So too the love which she produces has a separate existence and remains eternally in the Divine Realm.

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33 Ibid.

34 It should be noted that Plotinus distinguishes two Aphrodites following the two mythical accounts of her birth. The higher Aphrodite is daughter of Zeus and is pure. She is the mother of Divine Eros. The lower Aphrodite is daughter of Zeus and Dionne. Being of mixed parentage She is mixed as is lower *ἔρως* which is born at her birthday party.

35 3:5:3 It is also speculated that *ἔρως* is derived from *ἐρασις*.

36 Ibid.

Lower mixed Aphrodite represents the lower soul and the love accompanying it is the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  born of  $\pi\epsilon\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$  and  $\pi\rho\omicron\varsigma$  which comes to birth at Aphrodite's birthday party. Having mixed parentage it is a mixed love and is found in the lower realm of sense. To the extent that this love possesses desire for the good and is able to recollect, it turns souls ranked with it to the good and thus motivates them and starts them on their journey in search of the perfect life.

Each individual soul has its own individual love which is spirit and which gives the soul the desire appropriate to its nature. Just as individual souls are not completely severed entities but are included in the whole, so also the individual loves are related to and included in the whole. As the soul turns inwards and progresses in its quest for the Perfect Life it becomes more and more unified in itself until it realizes itself as Intellect, as  $\nu\omicron\theta\varsigma$ . In the same manner and concurrently with soul the accompanying love becomes more and more unified until it achieves unity with the Higher Divine  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which accompanies Higher Soul in the Divine Realm.

"So this love here leads each individual soul to the Good and the love which belongs to the higher soul is a god, who always keeps the soul joined to the Good, but the love of the mixed soul is spirit." 37

In answer to Plotinus' question "Is love a God, a spirit, or an affection of the soul?" we find it is all three. The higher love, that in the Divine Realm, is a God. Love in the universe and in individuals, the lower love, is a spirit and love as desire is an aspect of this lower mixed love and is an affection of the soul.

With these distinctions Plotinus has reconciled the "spirit love" of the Symposium with the "God-love" of the Phaedrus and has been able to make the notions of love in Plato's writings compatible with his own notions of love. The lower love with its dual nature of poverty and plenty is the love which seeks and desires to fulfill its need, its lack. This is the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which leads the soul to seek and attain the perfect life. But, once this is attained, it has nothing more to seek; it has satisfied its lack. It has led soul to unity with Intellect and now, satisfied, it must either disappear or change its nature; it is no longer poverty and want. Its character has been transformed and in that transformation it becomes unified and united with Divine  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ . As  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  has been guiding and sustaining soul in its quest for the Perfect Life, it has itself been in the process of becoming more and more unified until, at the moment when soul attains the perfect life, it becomes transformed and united with Divine  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ , the pure  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which has no

poverty, no lack. This is the restful tranquil <sup>of</sup> ερως which will effect the ultimate mystical union when the vision appears.

The importance of love then can be seen on two levels corresponding to the two realms and the two levels of love. Lower love has its importance for philosophy and the philosopher as that love of beauty and wisdom which is the motivator and sustainer for the lover/philosopher as he seeks to attain the perfect life of Intellect and become the contemplative. The higher Divine Love with which lower love becomes unified has its importance for the contemplative as he tranquilly and patiently waits for the vision which he must not seek. It is this Divine Love which will effect the Mystical Union in which for an ecstatic moment the contemplative becomes the One.

## CHAPTER II

### Soul and Nôûs

#### Soul

Unlike the word philosophy, which we can attribute to Pythagoras, the notion of soul or life as it is sometimes called cannot be attributed to anyone. Its origins appear to be lost in the depths of antiquity. Probably this obscurity is due to the fact that in some form or another the notion of soul is almost universal and can be found in the traditions and folk-lore of the majority of peoples who inhabit the world. From the earliest time the majority of philosophers has had a theory of soul, although it has been more prominent in some philosophies than in others. Naturally the theories and opinions have been varied but certain general characteristics emerged. As he discussed the theories of earlier philosophers, Aristotle, in his De Anima, remarked,

"Two characteristic marks above all others have been recognized as distinguishing that which has soul in it from that which has not - movement and sensation." 1

While some of the philosophers have considered soul to be single others have posited a plurality of souls. Some, placing emphasis on the knowing and perceiving aspect of soul have identified soul with, or constructed soul from,

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1 Aristotle De Anima 1:2 - Basic Works of Aristotle  
Tr. McKeon, Richard Random House New York, 1941.  
Pg. 538.

their first principles. If they posited one first principle only then soul was single, if more than one soul was a plurality of souls. Empedocles was one who proposed a plurality of souls, as Aristotle tells us.

"Thus Empedocles declares that it is formed out of all his elements, each of them also being soul; his words are:

"For 'tis by Earth we see Earth, by  
Water Water, By Ether Ether divine,  
by Fire destructive Fire By Love  
Love, and Hate by cruel Hate." " 2

In the same passage Aristotle tells us that Plato, subscribing to the idea that like knows like, said in the Timaeus that things are made from the elements and therefore soul must be also.

According to Aristotle all the philosophers subscribe to the notion that "like knows like". Accordingly then, those who described soul by the cognitive power posited soul(s) composed of their first principle(s) due to its (their) knowledge of everything. As thought and theories evolved, the general consensus seems to have been that soul had three characteristics. "All, then, it may be said, characterize the soul by these marks, Movement, Sensation, Incorporeality, and each of these is traced back to first principles."<sup>3</sup>

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2 Ibid. pg. 540.

3 Ibid. pg. 542.

Building on the ideas which he inherited from his predecessors, and particularly on those of Plato, Plotinus developed his own theory of soul. Soul as the last (or latest as Plotinus sometimes puts it) hypostasis or last real being in the scheme of Plotinus is the offspring of Divine Intellect,  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , and comes into being as a result of the outflow from  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  as it contemplates the One.<sup>4</sup> This emanation which is soul is an active power and is an image or representation of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . Unlike the other hypostases which are motionless, soul has movement, one might even say double movement, for it receives its fullness of life in its upward looking movement as it looks towards  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , its source, but its own image is created by its downward movement.<sup>5</sup> In Ennead 4:4:9 as he seeks to explicate the Divine Realm Plotinus uses the analogy of a series of concentric circles. The One is the centre, Intellectual Principle,  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , is an unmoving circle around the One with Soul a moving circle around  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , Soul's movement being its aspiration. We thus have a picture of the Divine Realm with Soul at the furthest remove from the One, in motion as opposed to being at rest, as is  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , and its motion is its aspiration towards the One. We see, then, how

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4 3:5:2, 5:1:7. See Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of emanation.

5 5:2:1, 5:1:7



Plotinus accounts for Soul. It is an emanation from <sup>7</sup>Voûs in its eternal contemplation and it is the hypostasis to which motion is attributed.

Rather than a single soul only, or simply a multiplicity of souls, Plotinus posited a Soul which was both One and many, both a unity and a multiplicity at one and the same time.<sup>6</sup> But in what sense is soul both a one and many at the same time? and what role does Soul have in the Philosophy of Plotinus? It is now our task to seek to answer these questions and as we do so to demonstrate once more the importance which Love has in Plotinian thought.

As we saw in Chapter One<sup>7</sup> Plotinus posits two souls, or rather two phases of soul, the Divine Soul, All-Soul, has both its higher and lower phases. But in addition there are numerous other souls, for there are numerous human beings; this is a fact of common human experience. Each person has his own soul which in turn has its higher and lower phases. In view of the multiplicity of men, then, the multiplicity of souls, the many aspects of soul would appear to be obvious. The difficulty lies in the fact that Plotinus claims that souls are, at the same time, a unity and in accounting for that unity in the face of the multiplicity which

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6 5:1:8; 4:9.

7 Chapter One pg. 33 and 34 .

manifests itself so clearly. Two possible explanations present themselves. The first would resolve the difficulty by positing the notion that the multiplicity is an illusion which disappears when the perfect life and perfect intellection is attained. This Plotinus will not do. Every soul is a Real Substantial Being and as such cannot in any way be an illusion. Although soul is a unity, a fact which Plotinus reiterates throughout the Enneads, he is very insistent in maintaining the individuality of the human soul. The human being must be himself with his own actions and thoughts. "...each several thing must be a separate thing; there must be acts and thoughts that are our own; the good and evil done by each human being must be his own;"<sup>8</sup> Even when the perfect life is attained and when the soul realizes its unity with Soul and Intellect, even when it achieves the Mystical Union, its individuality is maintained. Socrates is still Socrates,<sup>9</sup> precisely because nothing of real being is ever annulled and a soul is a real being, a substantial being.

"Now nothing of Real Being is ever annulled. In the Supreme, the Intellectual Principles are not annulled, for in their differentiation there is no bodily partition; each separate phase possesses identical being within the diversity. It is exactly so with the souls." 10

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8 3:1:4  
 9 4:3:5  
 10 4:3:5

We see, then, that when in the embodied state, even though the perfect life is attained, the individuality of the human soul is maintained; it cannot be annulled or disappear. Even suicide will not annul or destroy the soul. In this case the soul leaves the body taking something of body with it and thus is not a free agent. "Your dismissal will ensure that it must go forth taking something (corporeal) with it, and its going forth is to some new place."<sup>11</sup> Similarly even when not embodied the human soul remains an individual soul. Indeed it is only in the unembodied state that it is fully master of itself although in the unembodied state it dwells in the Divine Realm with the All-Soul and is intimately connected with it.<sup>12</sup> When it is brought into body the body has an influence on the soul which is then not unrestrictedly sovereign.<sup>13</sup> We can then reject the illusory nature of the multiplicity of souls as the answer to the One and Many nature of soul.

The second possible explanation posits a soul which is one but which is parted and divided among many bodies. Plotinus rejects this explanation also for each soul is a whole, an individual substantial entity. Although Soul

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11 1:9

12 4:4:29

13 3:1:8

is divisible, yet at the same time it is indivisible. Its divisibility consists in the fact that it is present in every part of the recipient body simultaneously and yet is whole to each part. For example Soul is present to the finger, the toe, the arm, and every other part of the body. It is whole to each part and at the same time is whole to the whole body.<sup>14</sup>

"The nature at once divisible and indivisible, which we affirm to be Soul has not the unity of an extended thing: it does not consist of separate sections, its divisibility lies in its presence at every point of the recipient, but it is indivisible as dwelling entire in the total and entire in every part." 15

Soul is not, like a body, extended in space made up of sections strung together to form a whole, rather it is a unified whole neither wholly impartible nor wholly partible.<sup>16</sup> Without mass itself soul is present to all mass and remains an unsundered thing, any partition occurs in body not in soul. The soul only appears divided when in relation with the body.

"....it remains a self gathered integral and is parted among bodies' merely in the sense that bodies, in virtue of their own sundered existence, cannot receive it unless in some partitive mode, the partition in other words is an occurrence in body, not in soul." 17

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14 4:9:1 - 4:2:1

15 4:2:1

16 4:2:2

17 4:2:1

The multiplicity of souls then is not an illusion, nor is soul one but divided among a multiplicity of bodies. There are many real substantial souls and yet that there is some unity to soul is indicated by the sympathetic relations which exist among men. I do not feel the pain of another man's mangled finger in my finger and yet I have a feeling of pain with him in his pain but it is not actual bodily pain. It is a common fact of human experience that we suffer and rejoice together and form attachments with one another.<sup>18</sup>

How then can the multiplicity of souls be a unity? The answer found in Ennead 4:9 lies in the fact that the multiple souls arise from the All-Soul which remains ever the same, undivided. The multiplicity of souls has its unity in the All-Soul from which it arises and in which it is contained.

"....the many will rise from a one which remains unaltered and yet includes the one-many in virtue of giving itself, without self abandonment, to its own multiplication.

It is competent thus to give and remain, because while it penetrates all things it can never itself be sundered: this is an identity in variety." 19

In order to explicate this many arising from a unity Plotinus uses the analogy of a science. A certain science

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18 4:9:3

19 4:9:5

is a unity, for example Geometry, and yet there are many constituents to the science which have it as their source. However they all stand together as one whole, Geometry. It is in this sense that soul is a unity. The multiplicity of souls arises from the unity All-Soul. The fact that we, as embodied souls, do not understand the manner in which soul is a unity is due to our feebleness and to the body which obscures the truth.<sup>20</sup> As a soul progresses on its journey towards its goal its task is to purify itself and free itself from the encumbrances and fetters of the body. Only when soul ceases to be concerned with external things and turns inward into itself will it begin to see and understand the unity which is soul, the unity which is a one and many. "When we look outside of that on which we depend we ignore our unity; looking outward we see many faces, look inward and all is the one head."<sup>21</sup> But as Plotinus says,<sup>22</sup> no doubt everything will not be seen as a whole at first but, as soul progresses on its upward, inward path, the unity which it is will become increasingly clear, until it attains the Divine Realm and Intellection when it will see and understand. Only then will it

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20 Ibid.

21 6:5:7

22 4:9:5

realize and understand the unity of Soul, the one and many for "There all stands out clear and separate".<sup>23</sup>

Here again we see the importance of love, for love in its two-fold role is the key which unlocks the problem of the one and many. As ordinary men we cannot hope to understand the unity of Soul. It is only to those who have ascended to the Divine Realm that this unity becomes manifest. As we saw earlier<sup>24</sup> love is the necessary condition. Only through the motivating force of the lower love can the ascent be made from the realm of sense. But once in the Divine Realm love is again necessary for without love, love of wisdom in the form of dialectic, as his mentor and guide, the philosopher would never achieve the perfect life of intellection and would never understand the unity which soul is. Without this love, man would remain in his state of separation from himself and his fellows, unable to see and understand his own unity and the essential unity which all things are. It is only through love that the problem of the one and many can be solved and thereby understood.

But, important as this may be, love is of even greater importance to soul. Soul in its highest unity and interiority not only realizes through the efficacy

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23 Ibid.

24 See Chapter I.

of love that it is a unity but it becomes love. Once it achieves the perfect life, after first having attained the stage of philosopher and then having practised dialectic as it traversed the Divine Realm, the soul rests tranquilly in contemplation awaiting the Mystical Union. It takes into itself a glow from the outpouring of light from the One and becomes Love. Fully unified in love it rises beyond Intellectual Principle to the One.<sup>25</sup>

Having established in what sense Soul is a one and many and having seen the importance of love in solving this problem we must turn our attention to the function of soul and the importance of love to its function. We saw earlier that the world posited by Plotinus is divided into two realms, the phenomenal realm of sense on the one hand and the Divine Realm of Intellect on the other. Although soul is the lowest of the three hypostases and occupies the lowest place in the Divine Realm it is of great importance for it holds the highest place and rank in the phenomenal realm. Soul has, as we might say, a foot in each realm. By virtue of its higher phase it remains eternally in the Divine Realm but in its lower phase is closely linked with the phenomenal realm thus providing a permanent and perpetual bridge between the two, "...linking the two extremes, receiving from one side to exhibit to the

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25 6:7:22 This point will be treated more fully in Chapter III.



other in virtue of being able to assimilate itself to each",<sup>26</sup> "....thus it has dealings with both orders ....  
.... poised midway between it is aware of both".<sup>27</sup>

But how and in what sense is soul in both realms and thus able to form the bridge? Just as All-Soul emanates from  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  as it contemplates the One so also the Cosmos or World is an emanation for All-Soul as it in turn contemplates  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  . In its higher phase All-Soul remains in the Divine Realm in eternal contemplation but in its lower phase is the Soul of the World. In a certain sense Soul is the creator of the world which emanates from it but we should always remember that Soul receives its gifts from  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  .

"....then (the secret of creation is that) the Soul of the All abides in contemplation of the Highest and Best, ceaselessly striving towards the Intelligible Kind and towards God; but thus absorbing and filled full it overflows - so to speak - and the image it gives forth, its last utterance towards the lower, will be the creative puissance.

This, then, is the ultimate Maker, secondary to that aspect of soul which is primarily saturated from Divine Intelligence." 28

The whole cosmos is ensouled. As a single living being it is ensouled by a single soul which extends to all the members of the cosmos. Each individual thing found

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26 4:4:23

27 4:6:3

28 2:3:18

in the cosmos is likewise ensouled and is an integral member of the cosmos, even down to the rocks and stones which continue to grow as long as they are embedded. Because all are members of one living whole and participate in it there are mutual interrelationships between all the members, each one affects every other, all are encircled by the cosmos and contained in it.<sup>29</sup> But although the cosmos is a single living being ensouled by a single soul, the lower phase of All-Soul, soul is not in the cosmos but present to it. The universe is in soul, not soul in it,<sup>30</sup> each grade is contained in the next higher. Thus the universe is in Soul, Soul in Intellectual Principle, and Intellectual Principle in the One.<sup>31</sup> Not only is Soul the maker and creator of the universe it is also its administrator and governor, a task which it performs without descending from the Divine Realm.<sup>32</sup> This it does according to *λογος* or Reason Principle, according to the plan contained in the Reason Principle<sup>33</sup> for Soul is the expression or

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29 4:4:32

30 4:3:9

31 6:7:35/6

32 4:3:9

33 2:3:13

λόγος of Intellectual Principle.<sup>34</sup> Reason Principle which is the λόγος of νοῦς carries within it in seed fashion all the characteristics and traits which will develop and unfold in the universe and which will be brought to fruition as Soul governs and administers it. Thus we see the sense in which Soul can be said to be in both realms. In its lower phase it ensouls the whole cosmos and in its higher phase it creates the cosmos and at the same time governs and administers it.

But, although Soul administers and governs the universe according to a plan contained in Reason Principle, it is not a plan which is deliberated about and willed, rather it is a natural occurrence and a natural unfolding. Similarly the creation of the Universe by Soul is a natural occurrence. All its creation takes place according to nature and natural process<sup>35</sup> rather than by applied art which would require a deliberate and premeditated plan.

"We are not to think that Soul acts upon the object by conformity to any external judgement; there is no pause for willing or planning, any such procedure would not be an act of sheer nature but one of applied art; but art is of later origin than soul; it is an imitator producing dim and feeble copies...." 36

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34 4:3:5

35 3:2:3

36 4:3:11

Throughout the Enneads there are many references to the fact that creation is a natural process, according to nature rather than art. In Ennead 2:9 entitled Against the Gnostics we find that it is necessary for Soul to create in order to be what it is, without this creation it would not be Soul. The Divine Realm is the Real Realm, that of Substantial Divine Beings. This phenomenal realm which is the creation of soul is a reproduction, a copy of that Realm, but nevertheless it is a clear and beautiful image.

"Such a reproduction there must necessarily be - though not by deliberation and contrivance - for the Intellectual could not be the last of things, but must have a double act, one within itself and one outgoing." 37

Again we see that the creation is not the result of deliberation or contrivance. Anything produced by art would have to be according to a preconceived, deliberative, willed plan and be copies of that image produced by soul. As art is an imitator of soul it can only produce copies of what is produced by soul. Its productions therefore are merely imitations of a reproduction, imitations twice removed from the real and thus as Plotinus says "dim and feeble copies".<sup>38</sup>

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37 2:9:8

38 4:3:11

Soul then is the bridge, the link, the interpreter between the Divine and the phenomenal realms. This it accomplishes by being creator, sustainer and governor of the universe. It has as it were a part in each. Its higher phase in its eternal contemplation of *vous* provides the activity of soul through which creation takes place but its lower phase is that which ensouls the universe.

Similarly, as we saw earlier,<sup>39</sup> the individual human souls also span both realms. Part of human soul, the Divine part is eternally in the Intellectual Realm but the lower phase descends to the universe and governs and administers the body. Just as the universe is in soul, so body is in soul, not soul in the body, but there is a difference. The individual human soul, in its lower phase descends into the phenomenal realm and to some degree is affected by the desires and afflictions of the body in its task of administration. The task of the human soul is to free itself from the encumbrances of the body and rise once more to the Divine Realm. In contrast, the All-Soul, even in its lower phase in which it is the soul of the world, never leaves the Divine Realm but performs its office of governing and administering from on high. Nevertheless in a sense,

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39 Chapter I.

the individual soul parallels the All-Soul for both perform the office of eternally bridging the gap between the two realms and both govern and administer their own appropriate entities.

We must now consider the importance which love has in the creative role of soul.<sup>40</sup> Three passages help us to see this importance. In Ennead 3:8:7 Plotinus tells us that Real Beings come from contemplation and are contemplation<sup>41</sup> and in 3:8:8 that all things are a by-product of contemplation. Each hypostasis contemplates the one next higher than itself and in its contemplation produces the next lower for which it then becomes the object of contemplation. The universe, as we saw, is the result of Soul's contemplation of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . Soul, then, in turn becomes the object of contemplation for the universe. The creating powers, in their generating do so, not in order to create as such but in order to produce an object of contemplation.

But what is contemplation? It is a type of visioning or seeing, an intellectual seeing. It is a seeing which is a higher activity than reasoning and in a certain sense a higher activity than intellection.<sup>42</sup>

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40 In speaking of creation we should be careful to keep in mind that creation in the Plotinian sense should not be equated with the Christian notion of creation by God to his will and plan.

41 Armstrong A.H. Plotinus III Loeb Classical Library. William Heinemann Ltd. London 1967. pg. 381.

42 This notion will be dealt with in chapter III.

There is a rest, a peace in contemplation for, when soul attains the perfect life, it rests in contemplation, in visioning. But in this context, these two, visioning and contemplation, are one and the same for it is the same Greek word *θεωρία* which is variously translated by vision and contemplation.

But how does this notion of creation as a byproduct of contemplation or visioning relate to love and give love a role in creation. In 3:5:3 we read that the higher love is the eye of the higher soul and it is through love therefore that soul looks and has her vision.<sup>43</sup> Love therefore has a most important role in soul's contemplation for it is through its eye, which is love, that soul visions or contemplates, which results in the creation of the universe. Thus it is true to say that love has a vital role in the creation of the universe for without that love which is the eye of the soul the universe would not be. The notion of love having a role in creation is further strengthened in 3:5:2 where we read

"....the Soul directs its act towards him and holds closely to him and in that love brings forth *ἑρως* through whom it continues to look towards him."

Soul directs her act which is loving towards Intellect and in that act of loving the higher love is born and through that love Soul continues to look towards Intellect.

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43 See Chapter I, pg. 33 .

If as Plotinus says in 3:8:8 all things are a byproduct of contemplation then at this point and in this context contemplation and love are almost synonymous for Plotinus, for in the act of loving love is generated.

Again we see the importance of love. It is only through the love, the eye of soul, that the universe is created. It is only through this love that she continues to look towards and love  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , thus everlastingly creating the universe. Without this love creation could not take place and therefore without this love soul could not perform its function of governor and administrator for there would be nothing to govern or administer. The dual aspects of Plotinus' philosophy are once more evident. Soul itself is dual, having its higher and lower aspects both on the All-Soul level and on the individual level. Soul also has a dual role. On the one hand it remains eternally in the Divine Realm loving, contemplating  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , but at the same time it acts as governor and administrator of the universe. The importance of love also has its dual aspect. The lower love is the motivating force which moves souls in their search for the perfect life. It moves them from the lower realm to the higher realm and guides them as they traverse the Divine Realm until they can achieve the perfect life and realize and understand in what manner



the soul is a unity. Higher love on the other hand is that act of loving through which the soul, in its contemplation, generates the universe and through which itself becomes love.

### Nous or Intellectual Principle

To find a single word in the English language which will adequately and accurately convey the meaning which  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  has in the philosophy of Plotinus is well nigh impossible. The concept contained in  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is so complex that it does not readily lend itself to an English equivalent. Various words and expressions have been used but no one word or expression has had universal acceptance. Spirit, as used by Inge,<sup>44</sup> while it might in one sense convey the meaning which Plotinus intended, has come to have meanings in the modern scientific, materialistic society which are definitely non-Plotinian. Again, Intellect conveys something of the notion but we are prone to consider intellection as a process which requires discursive reasoning and as such is certainly not found in  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  but rather in soul. Thus, although it may be somewhat cumbersome, we shall use, with McKenna, Intellectual Principle or alternatively the Greek  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ .

What then is this Intellectual Principle, this  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  which almost defies translation? What place

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44 W.R. Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus, Vol. II.  
pg. 37 ff.

does it hold in the philosophy of Plotinus and how is it connected with Love, that efficacious power which alone can effect the Ultimate Mystical Union with the One?

Intellectual Principle is the second hypostasis and it is that which emanates from the One in its overflow of superabundance.<sup>45</sup> It is constituted of thinker and thought, or we might say knower and known, or thought and its object. But although these can be distinguished one from the other they are, nevertheless, identical and form a unity, a single entity. As Plotinus says:

"In the advancing stages of contemplation rising from that in nature, to that in the Soul and thence again to that in the Intellectual Principle itself, the object contemplated becomes progressively a more and more intimate possession of the Contemplating Beings, more and more one thing with them; and in the advanced Soul the objects of knowledge, well on their way towards the Intellectual Principle, are close to identity with their container.

Hence we may conclude that in the Intellectual Principle itself, there is complete identity of Knower and Known, and this is not by way of domiciliation, as in the case of even the highest soul, but by Essence, by the fact that, there 'Being and Knowing are identical';" 46

The objects of its knowledge then are contained in the Intellectual Principle, the two are one, essentially one. It is a one/many in contrast to the

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45 See Chapter III, pg. 75 ff. for a fuller treatment of emanation.

46 3:8:8

one and many which soul is.<sup>47</sup> The distinction between Intellectual Principle and the Intellectual Realm, its object, then, must be a logical one rather than one of separation for as they are identical there can be no separation.

"Such a difference there must be if there is to be any intellection; but similarly there must also be identity (since in perfect knowing, subject and object are identical)." 48

If it is so, that knower and known are identical, then the knowledge in Intellectual Principle must be a knowledge which is immediately present, intuitively, rather than a knowledge gained by discursive reasoning which requires the processes of analysis and synthesis in order to arrive at its object. Discursive reasoning is the function of soul but intellection, the intuitive immediate grasping of its object, belongs to Intellectual Principle.

"Soul deals with thing after thing - now Socrates; now a horse; always some one entity from among beings - but the Intellectual Principle is all and therefore its entire content is simultaneously present in that identity: this is pure being in eternal actuality; nowhere is there any future, for every then is a now; nor is there any past for nothing there has ever ceased to be ..... and everything in that entire content is Intellectual Principle and Authentic-Existence, and the total of all is Intellectual Principle entire and Being entire." 49

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47 cf. Chapter 2, pg. 41 ff.

48 5:1:4

49 Ibid.

Thus we see that in Intellectual Principle and the Intellectual Realm there are no temporal divisions or separations. Everything is immediately present in an eternal presence. It is only our feeble and imperfect minds which inevitably separate the content of this one Intellectual Principle.<sup>50</sup> Similarly there can be no spatial division and separation in Intellectual Principle. There is no exclusiveness only mutual inclusiveness and unity for "...There time is replaced by eternity and space by its intellectual equivalent, mutual inclusiveness."<sup>51</sup> Any division or separation then, either temporal or spatial, inevitable in the human mind, is merely a logical division or separation not a real one.

Intellectual Principle then is a unity/duality, the all embracing knower and known, thinker and thought, knowing by intuition, thinking itself, knowing itself immediately, Being entire. The notion of the intuitive immediate knowing of *vous* is further supported in 3:8:11 where we are told "Intellectual Principle is a seeing, a seeing which sees itself". The knowing is a seeing, a visioning, and knowledge gained through sight is immediate.

Having seen that Intellectual Principle is a self knowing, a self seeing, we should ascertain what

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50 5:9:9

51 5:9:10

it is that it knows and sees when it sees itself.

Plotinus asks this same question in 5:3:8. In his answer we find that "the Intellectuals are of one same nature with the Intellectual Realm which contains them just as the Reason Principle in the seed is identical with the soul, or life principle, containing it."

Although the Intellectual Realm will not remind us of colours and shapes found in things in the material realm they are nevertheless the ideal archetypes for at 5:9:9 we read:

"This universe is a living thing capable of including every form of life; but its Being and its modes are derived from elsewhere; that source is traced back to the Intellectual Principle: it follows that the all-embracing archetype is in the Intellectual Principle, which therefore must be an Intellectual cosmos, that indicated by Plato in the phrase, 'The Idea of living being.' "

The ideal archetype then is Intellectual Principle, the idea of the universe. This material universe is but an imperfect copy of that ideal Intellectual Realm. But  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is not only the ideal archetype of the universe it is also the ideal archetype of everything in the universe.

"We take it, then, that the Intellectual Principle is the authentic existences and contains them all - not as in place but as possessing itself and being one thing with this its content all are one there and yet are distinct.

..... the Intellectual Principle is all Being in one total - and yet not in one, since each

of these beings is a distinct power which, however, the total Intellectual Principle includes as the species in a genus, as the parts in a whole." 52

" If, then, the Intellection is an act upon the inner content (of the Intellectual Principle), that content is the Form, and the Form is the Idea.

What then is that content?

It is an Intellectual Principle and an Intellective Essence, no Idea distinguishable from the Intellectual Principle, each actually being that Principle. The Intellectual Principle entire is the total of the Ideas, and each of them is the (entire) Intellectual Principle in a special form....

This Intellectual Principle therefore, is a unity while by that possession of itself it is, tranquilly, the eternal abundance.

Being, therefore, and the Intellectual Principle are one Nature: the Beings, and the Act of that which is, and the Intellectual Principle thus constituted, all are one: and the resultant Intellections are the Idea of Being and its shape and its act." 53

Thus we see that the Forms and the Ideas have been placed in Intellectual Principle making it a one/many for there are many ideal forms each one distinct from the others but nevertheless they are essentially a unity. They are at once Intellectual Principle and the thoughts of Intellectual Principle, Divine mind. Here we see a divergence from Plato. The Forms and Ideas of Plato are universal Ideas but they are not thought by any thinker. They are the ever transcendent Ideas and as such are inaccessible to man, at least in this life. In

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52 5:9:6

53 5:9:8

contrast Plotinus places the Forms within Intellectual Principle and as such they are Intellectual Principle and the thoughts of Intellectual Principle for the two are identical as we saw earlier. By doing this Plotinus makes the Forms accessible to man in this life. He no longer is separated from them by an unbridgable gap for, as we saw in the section on Soul, Soul provides a link between the material sensible realm and the Intellectual Realm. Soul, in seeking to realize its goal, must come to itself in its higher phase and realize that it is Intellectual Principle and thus is united with the Forms in Intellectual Principle.

We have, then, the answer to our question. What is Intellectual Principle and what place does it hold in the thought of Plotinus? It is the one/many, thought and object of thought, which thinks or sees itself. It is the Forms, the Ideas, the Ideal Form of the universe and of all that is in the universe which is transmitted to the material realm through the Reason - Principles which are in Soul. But while the Forms are distinct and can be distinguished they are not separated, they are a unity, for the distinction is a logical one not one of separation. It is Being, the Authentic Existent and its place is that of second hypostasis, second only to the One, which is the Ultimate Unity, the Absolutely

Simple, the Good.

We must now turn our attention to love and investigate the relationship between Intellectual Principle and Love. How are the two related?

$\text{No}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$  in its position as second hypostasis contemplates the One which is the hypostasis higher than itself, but at the same time it knows or contemplates itself.<sup>54</sup> From its act of contemplation soul is born for "all things are born of contemplation".<sup>55</sup> But as we saw in the section on Soul contemplation is almost synonymous with love, contemplation is a type of loving, a loving in the context of that Higher Love, the Divine  $\epsilon\pi\omega\varsigma$  which is found in the Higher Intellectual Realm where  $\text{No}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$  eternally abides. Here, then, we have a connection between  $\text{No}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$  and Love, but there are others.

We noted earlier that there are dual aspects in each level of the hierarchy found in the Philosophy of Plotinus. We found dual aspects to Philosophy and the Philosopher, the dual aspects or phases of Love and Soul. We found also that soul has a dual role.  $\text{No}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$  also has its dual aspect. Although it does not have the dual phases which Soul and Love have, it has its

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54 Knowing and seeing in Intellectual Principle are one and the same cf. pg. 59 and 3:8:11. Also, contemplation is a type of seeing cf. Section on Soul. pg. 53.

55 3:8:7



own dual aspect. The Intellectual Principle is Intellectual Principle but it must be something more than that, if it seeks union with the One, and Union with the One is the goal of life.

"The Intellectual Principle in us must mount to its origins: essentially a thing facing two ways, it must deliver itself over to those powers within it which tend upwards: if it seeks the vision of that Being, it must become something more than Intellect." 56

Thus we see that even Intellectual Principle, if it seeks the vision of the One, must become something other than Intellect and Intellection. It must give itself to those powers within itself which will take it upwards and which will allow it to transcend itself.

But what are those powers? It has two powers, those of intellection and loving.

"Intellectual Principle, thus, has two powers, first that of grasping intellectually its own content, the second that of an advancing and receiving whereby to know its transcendent, at first it sees, later by that seeing it takes possession of Intellectual Principle, becoming one only thing with that: the first seeing is that of Intellect knowing, the second that of Intellect loving; stripped of its wisdom in the intoxication of the nectar, it comes to love; by this excess it is made simplex and is happy; and to be drunken is better for it than to be staid for these revels." 57

Love then is one of the powers of  $\psi$ , the other is intellection. But intellection is the power

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56 3:8:9

57 6:7:35

which allows it to know itself, therefore love must be that other power which will take it upwards. Not only is love a power of  $\sqrt{\text{O}}\hat{\text{U}}\text{S}$  it is a higher power than intellection for we see in the above passage that it is the second power, an advancing and receiving which enables  $\sqrt{\text{O}}\hat{\text{U}}\text{S}$  to know its transcendent. And what is that transcendent? None other than the One, the Good. The intellective power of  $\sqrt{\text{O}}\hat{\text{U}}\text{S}$  does not allow it to know the One "for the Supreme is not known intellectually".<sup>58</sup> But  $\sqrt{\text{O}}\hat{\text{U}}\text{S}$  knows the One, therefore, if it cannot know the One by intellection it must know it by its other power, that is by love. Having gone beyond or transcended itself as intellection it comes to love. This is the power by which  $\sqrt{\text{O}}\hat{\text{U}}\text{S}$  comes to know the One, comes to be a simplex and be happy. The notion of love as a higher power than intellection is indicated in two ways in the above passage. First, Intellectual Principle knows itself immediately, grasping intellectually its own content, but in order to know its transcendent, that which is higher than itself, it must come to love. Love then must be higher than intellection. Second, only after it is stripped of its wisdom does it come to love and by this become simplex. By love it becomes unity (not the one/many which it formerly was) and simplex,

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58 Ibid.

but simplex is higher than one/many for it implies unity absolute. It is a term used of the One. Thus from this passage we can conclude that love is higher than intellection.

If we put these two passages together it is evident that Intellectual Principle, if it is to become more than Intellect, must become love, for love is that which is higher than intellect.

We now have the answer to our question; what is the relationship between  $\nu\hat{o}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$  and Love? There is a dual relationship, so we see once again the dual aspect to the Philosophy of Plotinus. Firstly  $\nu\hat{o}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$  is related to love in its contemplation of the One. Secondly we see that loving is one of the two powers of  $\nu\hat{o}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$ , its higher power; thus love is placed on a higher plane than intellection. But additionally and most importantly,  $\nu\hat{o}\hat{\upsilon}\varsigma$ , if it is to see the vision of the One, if it is to achieve union with the One, must become Love. We thus see once more the importance of Love in the thought of Plotinus and once more we assert that Love is the only power with the necessary efficacy to effect the Ultimate, mystical Union with the One which is the goal of life and its crowning glory.

### CHAPTER III

#### The One

We must now focus our attention on the One, demonstrating in our discussion that Love has importance for the One and that it is Love and Love alone which is the efficacious power which will effect that Union in which the One, the Highest, is reached.

As a Platonist Plotinus drew heavily on the system of Plato in propounding his system. As we noted in the Introduction<sup>1</sup> it has been speculated that he was unaware that his teachings differed from those of his master. There are significant differences, one of which lies in the Ultimate Union as the final goal of life and which is attainable in this life. This is a teaching to which Plotinus consistently and firmly adheres. Plato's system, as Rist observes,<sup>2</sup> was ultimately a dualism consisting of the immutable World of Forms on the one hand, and the World of movement and change on the other, each world being separate and distinct. This was not the case in World view of Plotinus for, as we have seen,<sup>3</sup> the two realms are kept in constant contact through the medium of soul. Soul provides the permanent and

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1 pg. 4.

2 Rist, J.M. op. cit. pg. 67 - 68.

3 Chapter II, pg. 47.

everlasting bridge which joins the two. All is, in a certain sense and in the final analysis, contained in the One, the Supreme: "...the First is neither remote from things nor directly within them, there is nothing containing it, it contains all."<sup>4</sup> By placing the Forms into Intellectual Principle, Plotinus converted Plato's dualism into a monism. The Forms which were transcendent and unattainable in Plato's system became accessible within  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , placed there not merely as concepts but as states or activities of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . "Justice therefore is not the thought of Justice but as we may put it, a state of the Intellectual Principle, or rather an activity of it...."<sup>5</sup> This duality within a unity, thought and its object within one being, produces a system wherein there is a possibility for the merger of soul with the Supreme. No longer is the human Soul obliged to love and contemplate the Divine Realm from a distance across an unbridgable chasm as in Plato's system. Now the Forms are within range, contained within Intellect. The philosopher, raising himself to the level of Intellect, has the Forms within his grasp. This makes the system much more attractive and livable. It can now be the basis for the ordering of a life which has a goal attainable

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4 5:5:9

5 6:6:6

in this earthly life, a goal which Plotinus is reputed to have attained four times and which Porphyry claims to have reached once.

The Transcendent First Principle, usually called the One, stands at the apex of Plotinus's system. What then is the nature of this One, this Supreme Principle and in what way is Love related to and important to It?

The conception of the One is extremely complex and as such has led to a variety of interpretations which in turn have presented many perplexities in understanding the thought of Plotinus. One thing is abundantly clear: the One is absolutely transcendent. Plotinus insists on this throughout the Enneads. As he says in Ennead 5, "...then clearly this principle, author at once of Being and of self-sufficingness, is not itself a Being but is above Being and above even self-sufficing"<sup>7</sup> and as Armstrong says, "It is not Being, not in the sense that it transcends all beings knowable to us, but because it refuses all predication."<sup>8</sup>

If Being cannot be predicated of the One, then what can be?, absolutely nothing.<sup>9</sup> To predicate even

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7 5:3:17

8 Armstrong A.H. Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in the Philosophy of Plotinus. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1940. pg. 16.

9 3:8:10

Being of the One would be to introduce a duality in a certain sense and this cannot be for there can be no duality, not even a vague suspicion of duality in the One, Unity Absolute.<sup>10</sup> If there was how could it be the principle of unification and the existence of everything else? Anything predicated of the One, when It is conceived of as Unity Absolute in the mathematical sense, would destroy or at least cast doubts on that unity. Naturally this extremely negative concept of the One is not the whole picture. We are able to form some concepts of the One but this must be done by way of negation which is a much more appropriate way to approach the nature of the One than predication and description.<sup>11</sup>

We find, then, that the One is beyond Being, and therefore beyond thought and thinking, beyond νοῦς and the activity of νοῦς, beyond sense and beyond life even for "...the Supreme is not in life but above life;"<sup>12</sup> and yet in 6:8:16 Plotinus suggests that it is an activity, an activity superior to, and of a different kind to that of νοῦς. It is the creator and maker of Intellectual Principle, thought, life, and all that exists. For Plotinus his First Principle was not only the One but also the Good.<sup>13</sup> That is not to say good in any

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10 This is the usual view taken by Plotinus but as we shall see later there are passages which hint at a form of duality. cf. pg. 77.

11 5:5:6

12 6:7:35

13 The Good is the highest Form in the system of Plato. In the thought of Plotinus it is not only the Highest but is seen by humans as the Good for them and as the goal in life. However this does not predicate "goodness" of the One. "The word 'Good' used of him is not a predicate asserting his possession of goodness; it conveys an identification. 6:7:38

conventional sense of good. Goodness, just as anything else, cannot be predicated of it. It is the Author and Source of the good and therefore "...it is good in the unique mode of being The Good above all that is good".<sup>14</sup> The problem when speaking or thinking of the One lies in the inadequacy of human language and thought, no matter how brilliant the thought may be or how rich the language, both are poverty stricken vehicles incapable of expressing its excellence and perfection. The One far outstrips and transcends the meagre resources of human thought and language.

Infinitely perfect, absolutely simple and simplex,<sup>15</sup> the One wholly surpasses and transcends any of the realities which man can know and describe. Even the Forms, content of Divine mind and νοῦς itself are but an image or trace of the Good and an imperfect image at that.<sup>16</sup> They receive a glow or radiance "the radiant grace which is the bloom upon beauty"<sup>17</sup> from the One, a radiance in which they bask and which gives and enhances their beauty. Although It gives beauty to all in the universe and is the unfailing cause of good and beauty,

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14 6:9:6

15 Plotinus often calls it the Simplex.

16 6:7:17; 5:5:5

17 6:7:22



and controller of all, Plotinus does not call the One beauty or beautiful for It is beyond beautiful, beyond the highest,<sup>18</sup> a beauty above beauty.<sup>19</sup>

By insisting on the absolute transcendence of the One Plotinus shows a marked difference from Plato who's first principle of the World of Forms, the Good, was a transcendent form but it was also a substance. Not so the Good of Plotinus, for his First Principle is neither form nor substance; it is totally transcendent. But even so we are told<sup>20</sup> that It is always present to us or we to It: if we will but look. If it is not present we are the ones at fault. In its transcendent otherness the Good comes closer than anything else in Greek Philosophy to the Christian notion of God who must be described in negative terms in order to show that he is more than can be expressed and contained in human thought and language and that he differs in kind from anything, even the highest reality, we can know. Neither God nor the Good can be known by intellection.<sup>21</sup>

This God-like aspect of the One<sup>22</sup> is further enhanced in passages in 6:8 where He is described as Pure Will, Love, Love of Itself and Cause of Itself. "Love, very

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18 1:8:2

19 6:7:32

20 6:9:7 and 8

21 6:7:35

22 He is called God in 6:9:9 and 5:3:7.

love, the Supreme is also self-love in that he is lovely no otherwise than from Himself and in Himself."<sup>23</sup> Not only is the God-like aspect of the One enhanced, for God is also love, but we see the relationship of the One and Love, a relationship of identity and we see that Love is important to the One. The two are identical and thus Love is of paramount importance. This relationship of love is further heightened in 6:8:16 where we are told he himself is that which he loves. Similarly in several places Plotinus refers to the One as Father, and the final goal of man, Union with the One, as returning to the Fatherland and the Father. "The Fatherland to us is There whence we have come, and There is The Father."<sup>24</sup> Again in Ennead 6 the One is referred to as God and is alluded to as a Noble Father in the analogy of the noble love of a daughter for a noble father.<sup>25</sup> This is not to imply that Plotinus thinks of the One in the same way that Christians think of God, as creator-father who loves and cares for his children and mankind and manifests himself in their lives. But on the other hand it does introduce the suggestion of a person,<sup>26</sup> a personal

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23 6:8:15

24 1:6:8

25 6:9:9

26 Rist, J.M. op. cit. Pg. III where he uses quasi-personal and supra-personal.

element, making for a little less remoteness. This must have been intentional on the part of Plotinus for, if he had not intended at least some of the implications involved in "Father", why would he have used other words such as source, cause, and principle, as he does elsewhere?

Thus the One is Unity Absolute beyond Being, beyond  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  and activity of  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , the Good but beyond goodness, entirely self-sufficient, devoid of need, lacking nothing. The Author and Principle of all that is, absolutely simple and perfect, the Transcendent Source is beyond the reach of thought and language, a perfect unity in the Pythagorean, mathematical sense. That is one side of the nature of the One. But on the other side there is the picture of the transcendent God-like One which is Love and which has a suggestion of a personal father-like element to it. At all time Plotinus insists on the utter perfection and transcendence of the One but even so the introduction of the personal element, while not destroying the perfection and transcendence, makes for a First Principle which is somehow less remote than the First Principle of Plato so that union with the One as man's ultimate and final goal becaomes feasible and more readily seen to be within man's reach.

But if the One is, as described by Plotinus, utterly perfect and transcendent, without distinction in its complete unity and self-sufficiency, how could it be the Author and First Principle? How and why would it produce the Intelligible World with its multiplicity in unity which in its turn produces Soul and Soul then the World of Sense and phenomena? Why did the One not remain solitary? Why did the many proceed from the One?

In order to explain how multiplicity arose Plotinus posited the process of emanation; multiplicity could not have been created by the One. This would imply a conscious, premeditated act, something which cannot be attributed to the One, for it is beyond consciousness. He therefore resorted to emanation. The Second hypostasis,  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , flows out from the One but at the same time leaves the One undiminished and unchanged. In Ennead 3:8:10, we are given two analogies to help us understand. In the first we are told that emanation takes place much as rivers flow out from a spring which is their source. The rivers originate from the spring which remains ever the same, untouched and undiminished. The second analogy tells of the abundant life which the root gives to the tree but it itself remains the same root. At the same time as it is the source of the

multiple in the tree, leaves, branches, and so on it remains itself, the root, an undiminished unchanged unity. In explaining emanation Plotinus gives us a picture of constant, continual, undiminished giving from the source without the source being in any way altered or diminished. Emanation from the One is analogous to this. All things are in the final analysis, an outpouring, an overflow of the Superabundance of the One. "...the One is perfect and in our metaphor has overflowed, and its exuberance has produced the new."<sup>27</sup> The new is a result of the One's undiminished giving. In turn Soul emanates from  $\psi\psi\psi$ , and then the sensible world from Soul.

Multiplicity, then, is the result of emanation. But why did emanation take place? Two answers, or at least two aspects to the answer, seem possible, one of which may, at first glance, seem to run contrary to the perfect nature of the One. As we noted earlier the concept of the One is extremely complex and in some sense, if not exactly contradictory, at least a little ambiguous. Nowhere is this more evident than when the question of emanation arises for it is very difficult to account for a duality arising from an absolute unity. As we saw in our previous discussion, at all the levels

in his system up to the One Plotinus not only posits a multiplicity of Beings but everything has its dual aspects. There is the double phase of ἐρως<sup>28</sup>, the ἐρως as desire and the Divine ἐρως of the Intellectual Realm. Each and every soul, individual souls and All-Soul has a double aspect in its higher and lower phases. νοῦς also, the One/Many has its double aspect, a double activity. νοῦς (knowing) seeing (ὁρᾶν) and νοῦς loving (ἐρᾶν).<sup>28</sup> We shall now see, as we seek to understand why emanation should take place, that it is possible to see a suggestion of a double aspect in the One, although this is contrary to the usual thought of Plotinus.

In Ennead 3:8 entitled On Nature, Contemplation, and the One, we read, "....all things are a biproduct of contemplation!"<sup>29</sup> Emanation, the process which produces all things, then, is a result of contemplation. A little later in the same passage when speaking of the generation of νοῦς and of its being a duality he says,

"The duality thus is a unity, but how is this unity also a plurality? The explanation is that the object of contemplation is not a unity: even when that object is the One itself, it is not seen as a unity; if it were the Intellectual Principle cannot exist. The Highest began as a unity but it did not remain as it began, all unknown to itself it became manifold, it grew as it were pregnant, and

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28 6:7:35 and chapt. 2 pg. 64 .

29 3:8:8

desiring universal possession it flings itself outward, though it were better had it never known the desire by which a secondary came into being." 30

It would seem then that there had to be dual aspect to the One, or at least it had to appear that way when it was the object of contemplation otherwise the Intellectual Principle could not exist, could not emanate. All things are a biproduct of contemplation therefore  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is the result of the One's contemplation of Itself<sup>31</sup> and in that contemplation it sees itself not as a unity but at least as a duality in order that  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  may come into existence. This notion of duality in the One is strengthened by the statement that it began as a unity but became manifold, "although it was in a non-deliberative act of which it was unaware". Similarly the idea of duality is further indicated by the selection of pregnant as a translation for  $\beta\epsilon\beta\alpha\rho\eta\mu\acute{\epsilon}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ <sup>32</sup> for this implies a two in One. In the discussion of emanation

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30 3:8:8

31 It had to contemplate itself for there was nothing else for it to contemplate. As we shall see on pg. 80 contemplation in the One is in effect loving. Usually an intellectual activity, contemplation in this context could not be intellectual because the One is beyond intellect and intellection and as we saw in Chapter 2 Soul's contemplation in its highest and final phase is loving.

32 McKenna S. uses pregnant. Armstrong uses heavy.

this passage is rarely quoted<sup>33</sup> probably because it expresses a notion which is unusual in the thought of Plotinus. Not only does Plotinus state that the One sees itself as more than one but he implies that when  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  also contemplates the One it is not seen as a unity.

Before we return to our discussion of emanation and while we are considering dual aspects of the One it might be profitable to consider the dual notions of Love which apply to the One. As we saw above<sup>34</sup> Plotinus describes the One as Love (  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  ) but in 6:8:16 when

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33 Armstrong A. H. Plotinus III Loeb Classical Library William Heinemann Ltd. London 1967.

In this volume pg. 386, Footnote I, Armstrong notes that this pessimistic view in which the One became manifold through desiring universal possession is unusual in Plotinus. Here  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is seen as being a type of fall, a notion which is usually reserved for the production of Soul by  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ . In spite of the fact that  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  is always on a lower level than the One, its production is usually seen by Plotinus as an overflow of superabundance.

There are some people, including Wolters, who take the position that this passage to rather than the One. Should this be the case, it still lends support to our point which is that dual aspects can be found in the One, for the passage states, "even when that object is the One itself, it is not seen as a unity." In other words, whether the one doing the contemplating is or the One, the object of contemplation, the One, is not seen as a unity. This, then, gives an aspect of duality to the One.

34 See pg. .



discussing how the One came to be, we find that rather than ἐρώ Plotinus uses ἀγαπάω. "He is borne so to speak, to the inmost of Himself in love of that pure radiance which he is, He himself being that which he loves." The One is cause of himself in his act of loving Himself and that love is the love of ἀγαπάω not ἐρώ. So we have the two different notions of love in the One, that of ἐρώ and that of ἀγαπάω. Although, as Rist observes,<sup>35</sup> Plotinus does not clarify the distinction, surely there must have been a reason for the use of the two different terms, otherwise why not use just the one word? Whatever the reason, it is unlikely we shall ever know exactly what Plotinus had in mind; any explanations offered can only be speculative. Could it not be that Plotinus wanted to show that there were the two senses of love in the One and so in the one passage he uses ἐρώ while in the other, the very next passage, he uses ἀγαπάω? By using ἐρώ to describe one phase of love in the One, a connection with Soul is made, for it is Divine ἐρώ which remains in the Soul which has attained the perfect life. It is this love which, as we shall see, will effect the ultimate union. Is it not also possible that, in speaking of the One's "making" of himself, Plotinus wanted to convey a different sense

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35 Rist J.M. op. cit. pg.99 .

of love than <sup>31</sup>ἔρως, a calmer and more steady sense, and so he chose <sup>32</sup>ἀγαπᾶω? For the Platonist Divine <sup>33</sup>ἔρως would be associated with "Divine madness". The One caused himself by loving himself, not in the "Divine madness" sense of <sup>34</sup>ἔρως but in a more calm and steady sense. Could this not be the notion which Plotinus wished to convey and thus be the reason for his use of <sup>35</sup>ἀγαπᾶω in this context? Divine madness tends to come and go, come and go in recurring cycles; the nature of <sup>36</sup>ἀγαπᾶω is much more steady and enduring. Plotinus probably saw this as much more appropriate than <sup>37</sup>ἔρως in attempting to convey the manner in which the One would love himself in his making of himself.

We see, then, the dual notions of Love which apply to the One and their importance. <sup>38</sup>ἔρως has its importance in its identity with the One. The One is <sup>39</sup>ἔρως, <sup>40</sup>ἔρως is the One. But the second sense of Love, <sup>41</sup>ἀγαπᾶω, that too applies to the One and its importance lies in the fact that it is through <sup>42</sup>ἀγαπᾶω, the <sup>43</sup>ἀγαπᾶω which the One has for itself, that It brings itself into existence. How, then, could anything be of more importance than Love to the thought of Plotinus?

We should now return to our discussion of emanation and the passage in 3:8:8 quoted above.<sup>30</sup> It is suggested in that passage that emanation was an unfortunate

circumstance which should not have occurred and is, as noted earlier,<sup>33</sup> a pessimistic view which is difficult, if not impossible, to explain for it does not reflect the usual view of Plotinus. His usual view is, as he repeatedly insists, that the products of emanation are good and beautiful.<sup>37</sup> The notion that emanation is due to desire on the part of the one at first glance appears incompatible with the often stated perfection of the One. But when we examine the passage carefully we find that it is not erotic desire on the part of the One, - the word ἐρῶν is not used in this context, but wanting, wishing, θελῶν.<sup>36</sup> The notion of emanation as erotic

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36 If we examine the Greek words used by Plotinus in 3:8:8 we find that "θελῶν" and not ἐρῶν is used to express the notion of desire or want. Thus we have the notion of wanting rather than the desire which is pursuit as is the case in the lower ἐρως and which does not occur in the One. The notion of lack of desire as pursuit in the One is also strengthened in 3:8:11 where we read ἐκεῖ(νος) δὲ οὐτε ἐπιεμμένος, the One does not desire in the sense of going after or pursuing. So we find the θελῶν in the One, the wanting, would seem to be a wanting or a wishing for the manifold to be produced. Although it may seem strange to use the word "wanting" in connection with an otherwise perfect first principle, it is not exactly incompatible with some other statements by Plotinus. We have seen (Chapter 2 pg. 50) that the production of the whole metaphysical system is in accord with nature and not with art. It is also in accord with the nature of the One, (a nature which he willed for himself, see pg. 85) that νοῦς should emanate from Him. So we could say that it is in accord with his nature that he wanted to unroll himself (ἐξελίξεν ἑαυτόν) and have the manifold come into being. We also read that there must be something besides a unity (4:8:6) for the One could not remain alone. Thus the One wanted the emanation to occur in accordance with the nature which he is and which he willed.

37 2:9

desire on the part of the One would be incompatible with His perfection for it would imply a lack, a need which would then destroy that perfection. But the notion of emanation as due to a "wanting" is not so incompatible when we consider the "wanting" to be "wanting to have everything come into being", or a "wanting to unroll or unfold". This notion does not destroy the perfection of the One<sup>38</sup> and is compatible with the idea of emanation which is an overflow of superabundance and undiminished giving.<sup>39</sup>

It is possible, then, to reconcile the notion of "wanting" emanation to occur on the part of the One with His nature and perfection. Although this passage at 3:8:8 presents emanation as something which shouldn't have occurred, a view which is impossible to reconcile with Plotinus's other statements, our discussion has allowed us to see a suggestion of dual aspects to the One and we have seen the importance which those two loves ἐρως and ἀγαπᾶω have for the One.

This, then, is one answer to the problem of why emanation should occur. It is a result of a "wanting" on the part of the One. The second answer is rooted in the nature and perfection of the One. Several passages help us to explicate this. On examining them we find

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38 5:4:1

39 5:2:1

that is is natural that each being should be produced by that one which is immediately higher in the order.<sup>40</sup> Without this production or communication they would not be what they are.

"It is the essence of things that each gives of its being to another: without this communication The Good would not be Good, nor the Intellectual Principle an Intellective Principle, nor would soul itself be what it is:" 41

The World is a product of necessity not deliberate purpose, the higher kind produces in its own likeness by a natural process.<sup>41</sup> Thus we have two factors, necessity and non-deliberation. To these we can add a third, perfection. Emanation is due to the perfection of the One. In 5:4:1 Plotinus observes that beings, as they are perfected, produce in their own likeness. All other beings act in partial imitation of the One which is utterly perfect, and, as the beginning of power, all powerful. Therefore if other beings produce, which they do, they are doing so in imitation of the One. Thus he concludes that the One must produce, and produce out of its perfection, how could it do otherwise?

The One then is necessarily creative and productive owing to its perfection and nature. Additionally its production is not deliberative. But what is the necessity,

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40 2:9:3

41 2:9:3; 3:2:3 cf. chapter II pg. and following for a more complete treatment of emanation as being according to natural occurrences and not to any deliberative purposive act.

for necessity has an implication of force or compulsion? Surely it cannot be any external force which compels the One to production. If it were this type of necessity, the whole concept of the One would be undermined and destroyed, for there would have to be something higher which could exert this force. Then it must be a necessity of a different kind, a different order, an internal necessity rather than an external force, a necessity which stems from the nature of the One.

It may seem somewhat strange to speak of any kind of necessity in connection with the One. Even a necessity stemming from his nature would indicate some kind of force or chance over which He had not control. When we see in 6:8:16 that the One, in his self looking, makes himself as he wills himself to be, it is not quite so inconsistent as it seems to be at first. The One is not of the nature he is by chance, by happening to be that way; rather, he is the nature he is as a direct consequence of his willing himself to be what he is.

"Holding the supreme place - or rather no holder but Himself the Supreme - all lies subject to Him, or rather they stand there before Him looking upon Him, not he upon them. He is borne, so to speak, to the inmost of Himself in love of that pure radiance which he is He Himself being that which He loves. That is to say, as self-dwelling Act and in some sense Intellectual-Principle, the most to be loved, He has given Himself existence. Intellectual Principle is the issue of

act, but since no other has generated Him He is what he made Himself - He is not, therefore, 'as He happened to be' but as He acted Himself into being.

Again: if He pre-eminently is because He holds firmly, so to speak, towards himself, so that what we must call his being is this self-looking, He must again, since the word is inevitable, make Himself: thus, not 'as he happens to be' is He but as He Himself wills to be.

Nor is this will a hazard, as something happening; the will adopting the Best is not a thing of chance." 42

Thus any necessity is a result of the nature which He Himself willed for Himself and that nature is one of superabundance of perfection. The necessity, then, is in accord with a nature which has an outpouring and overflow of superabundance and perfection, not the necessity of compulsion and force. And what of non-deliberative? This could be construed in two different ways, either as something which is of a spontaneous, automatic nature, a natural consequence of something or as something which is unconscious.<sup>43</sup> It does not necessarily follow that because an action is not deliberate and planned it is an unconscious act. An automatic, spontaneous act can occur without the need for a specific

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42 6:8:16

43 In order to preserve the absolute simplicity and unity of the One all thought which would be within the range of intellect has to be excluded from the One as that includes the duality of knower and known. This exclusion of thought does not make the One unconscious. Rather the One is above thinking and intellection; it is self gathered and has no need of intellectual object. It has a super-intellection, a self awareness and self-intellection which stems from an inner consciousness in its eternal repose. 5:4:2

consciousness of that act but the fact that specific concentrated attention is not paid to that act does not make it an unconscious act. Plotinus specifically speaks of the One as being beyond consciousness; it is neither conscious nor unconscious but perhaps supra-conscious. Thus emanation, its outpouring, is an automatic spontaneous result of its superabundant, perfect nature.

Here we have the answers to our questions how and why multiplicity came to be, or how and why the many proceeded from the One. Multiplicity is the result of emanation from the One, a necessary and spontaneous consequence of His nature which he wills for himself.

But how can this concept of a spontaneous outflow be related to love? Certainly it cannot be applied to a love which is desire, a desire for possession. This type of love, seeking to possess, would be diametrically opposed to the notion of giving and even more so to undiminished giving which comes of the superabundant nature of the One. The desire which seeks to possess seeks to take into itself not to pour out. Thus the notion of emanation as an outpouring cannot be related to love as desire for possession. But is there not another concept of love, a love which gives without any thought of cost, a love which is beyond choice and choosing, a love which is so great that it simply is spontaneous in its outpouring and overflowing and which, in its spontaneity,



is creative? It is a love similar to the highest love of the Philosopher, the love remaining when he attains the perfect life. His love is spontaneous and creative. Could a parallel not be drawn here? Is it not possible that emanation could take place out of a love which is similar to the spontaneous creative love of the Philosopher?

As we have seen, Plotinus speaks of the One as  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ <sup>44</sup> but, in doing so, he cannot be using  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ <sup>45</sup> in the sense of desire.<sup>45</sup> To do so would be to destroy his very concept of the One for this is a desire of self-seeking, a desire to possess for one's own good. In this context it is usually an upward looking movement seeking to move upwards to possess the Good. How could the One be a love like this? There is no higher than the One, the Good. He is the Highest, the Supreme. Obviously then  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ <sup>46</sup> as the One could not be the upward looking and moving desire; Plotinus must have had another concept of  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ <sup>47</sup> in mind when speaking of the One as  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ .

In chapter one we found that in his treatise on Love<sup>46</sup> Plotinus distinguished two types of love, the

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44 6:8:15/16

45 3:8:11 As we saw there is no desire in the One in the sense of pursuit or going after and there is certainly pursuit involved in  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  as desire. See note 82, pg.

46 3:5

higher and the lower. The lower love was the love which, in its desire and strivings, motivated the philosopher on his upward journey. But, as we have seen, this love can in no way be compatible with the One, for there is no need, no lack in the One. But the higher love, is this compatible with the One? This is the love which keeps the soul ever joined to the Divine Realm, the love which rests in contemplating, the love into which the driving, seeking <sup>"</sup>ἐρως is transformed once the perfect life has been attained and desire has departed. <sup>"</sup>ἐρως is generally considered to be appetitive but there are many passages in the Enneads in which Plotinus speaks of love in a non-appetitive context. This higher love then is the love which is not incompatible with the One. This love in its highest purest form is the Love which the One is. Out of the perfection of the Love that the One is, emanation takes place leaving the One, the superabundant Love unchanged and undiminished, ever perfect ever full and ever creative. Here then is the connection between emanation and Love and here is a further importance for Love. All the multiplicity which arises does so due to the overflow of the superabundant Love which the One is, a Love which is limitless, an infinite Love. We see that the One is infinite and thus

Love is infinite when we read "the love will be limitless as the object is, an infinite love".<sup>47</sup> We should be careful, however, not to try to draw a complete parallel between the creative love of the Christian God who creates and cares for his children and the Love which is the One.<sup>48</sup> The One made all things and left them to their own devices. "He ignores all that produced realm, never necessary to Him, and remains identically what he was before he brought it into being."<sup>49</sup>

It is Love then, and Love alone, which permits emanation to take place. It is Love, the One loving Itself, which creates the One and it is from the superabundant overflow of the infinite Love which the One is that all that is arises. Man then has his ultimate source in the Love which is the One. It now remains for us to demonstrate how that same Love will effect the ultimate Union with the One and return the Soul once more to its source.

'Birds of a feather flock together' is the present day proverbial expression of the notion "Like knows like",

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47 6:7:32

48 The One is not some kind of Divine Providence, that is the task of Soul. But the One, as we saw on pg. , loves himself, not only in himself but as he appears in or is present with other beings, his effects, we might say. He loves himself in us.

49 5:5:12

an idea which was common to the philosophers who preceded Plotinus. He also subscribed to this notion for he says, "Like is destined unfailingly to like"<sup>50</sup> and in 6:7:31 he tells us that lovers seek to be like the beloved in order to increase their attraction of person and likeness of mind. "In the same way the soul loves the Supreme Good, from its very beginnings stirred by it to love".<sup>51</sup> Thus only the Soul which has come to love, become love, will achieve that ultimate union.

The highest state which can be reached under the drive of *ἐρως* as desire and by dialectic is the perfect life, the realization of union or oneness with *νοῦς*, Divine Intellect. This is soul at its highest, in its fullest self-realization. This only occurs when we have escaped the bonds of the lower self and the attachments of the body and have passed into the intellectual realm. But this is not the highest, there is a still higher, Union with the One. However

"We must not run after it, but fit ourselves for the vision and then wait tranquilly for its appearance, as the eye waits on the rising sun, which in its own time appears above the horizon...." 52

"There are those that have not attained to see. The soul has not come to know the splendor There; it has not felt and clutched to itself that love-passion of vision known to the lover come to rest where he loves." 53

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50 4:3:13

51 6:7:31

52 5:5:8

53 6:9:4

Again we see<sup>54</sup> that Soul must wait tranquilly for the vision which appears suddenly and unheralded to those who have come to rest in love. Love, then, is the principle of unity. Love knows Love. We can only know Him by that in us which is like Him.

"....but this Entity transcends all of the intellectual nature; by what direct intuition then, can it be brought within our grasp?

To this question the answer is that we can know it only in the degree of human faculty: we indicate it by virtue of what in ourselves is like it.

For in us, also, is something of that Being;...."<sup>55</sup>

But Love is the only faculty in us which is like Him, for He is Love and the Soul which sees the vision becomes Love and makes a leap to reach the One. "Only by a leap can we reach the One which is to be pure of all else....."<sup>56</sup> It is a leap made by the soul which

"taking that outflow from the divine is stirred: seized with a Bacchic passion, goaded by these goads it becomes Love." <sup>57</sup>

"But when there enters into it a glow from the divine, it gathers strength, awakens, spreads true wings, and however urged by its nearer envioning, speeds its buoyant way elsewhere, to something greater to its memory: so long as there exists anything loftier than the near, its very nature bears it upwards, lifted by the giver of that love. Beyond Intellectual Principle it passes but beyond the Good it cannot, for nothing stands above That." <sup>58</sup>

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54 As we saw in chapter I, pg. .

55 3:8:9

56 5:5:4

57 6:7:22

58 Ibid.

So Soul becomes Love, and speeds on its way to Union with the One, its nature which is now Love bearing it upwards, lifted by the giver of that love, who is none other than the One. "There only is our veritable love and There we may unite with it, not holding it in some fleshly embrace but possessing it in all its verity."<sup>59</sup>

Thus the soul which in its glimpse of the vision becomes love is seized by the "Divine Madness" and is united to the One, to Love, by the efficacy of the power of that Love. Once having seen the vision, the Soul, although admittedly longing for a reappearance, is now seized and filled with joy, a true love, a reverence even a type of adoration and worship.

"If he that has never seen this Being must hunger for It as for all his welfare, he that has known must love and reverence It as the very Beauty; he will be flooded with awe and gladness, stricken by a salutary terror; he loves with a veritable love, with sharp desire; all other loves than this he must despise, and disdain all that once seemed fair." 60

The vision fades but the seeing which is love and adoration remains. The Soul is filled with this Love and all that was once fair and lovely is now of no moment, of no account.

This is not to imply that the One comes down to bring the vision to the Soul. The One does not descend

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59 6:9:9

60 1:6:7

as does God in the Christian notion of the Incarnation. This would be unthinkable to Plotinus and should anyone get this notion he would err greatly. The One is ever transcendent and far beyond the reach of man in any normal usage of "reach". But nevertheless in visioning, the Soul can and does sometimes see the vision of the Transcendent One. Only the soul which is fitted or rather which has fitted itself can see this vision. The Soul must make long and arduous preparation but, unless the One appears, shows itself, or allows itself to be seen, the Soul is unable to see it. In this context the One might be said to give a kind of Grace to the Soul and bring it salvation. Although this is not Grace or Salvation in the Christian concept, it is a kind of Grace and Salvation.

This then is the Ultimate importance of Love and it bears out our claim that Love is the efficacious power which will facilitate the Ultimate Mystical Union. It is Love and Love alone in which the Union takes place. The One is Love, the Soul becomes love in that mystical union. It is love which returns the soul to its source and as it were brings it its Grace and Salvation.

## CONCLUSION

Certainly Plotinus recognized that Love has a vital role in the life of man for he made it the single most important factor and force in his thought. It might even be said that his is a Philosophy of Love, for without Love his philosophy, as we see it, could not exist. That is not to say that other factors do not have their importance. Reason and dialectic too have their necessary roles but even so they are secondary to Love. Love has a higher and greater role.

We have seen that Love is important at every stage or level of Plotinus's thought while reason and dialectic are restricted to the middle stages. They have no part to play in the initial motivation nor in the attainment of the mystical union. These are achieved solely under the auspices of Love. Reason and dialectic can take the soul to the perfect life but no further and, even in their own field of activity, they need the services of Love to sustain the soul in its pursuit of wisdom. In the Divine Realm of Intellect we see again the supremacy of Love for, of the two powers of  $\nu\omicron\tilde{\nu}\zeta$ , knowing and loving, loving is the higher power. Finally, in the Realm of the One, we find that, seated at the pinnacle of Plotinus's system, the One cannot be reached by intellection.



It is available to Love and Love only, for It is Love. Love reigns supreme.

Love is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. It is from Love, the superabundance of love which the One is, that everything emanates and it is to Love, that same Love, the One, that Soul returns when it attains its final goal. Love is the creative principle and Love is necessarily the principle of unification for only "like can know like", only Love can know Love, and the One is Love. The Soul at the moment of unification has become Love and it is lifted by the Giver of that Love, the One, to unification.

But that is not to say that in this unification the three hypostases collapse into each other and become totally and inextricably identical. Even in the mystical union there is still something of difference along with the identity, there is still something of soul in soul and something of intellect in intellect. The union takes place between the Divine  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which soul becomes, the love which intellect comes to, the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which no longer is a searching and seeking but which is resting and tranquilly, and the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which the One is. The three hypostases are unified in love for, as Rist remarks,<sup>1</sup> it is the only element in us which is akin to the One.

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1 Op. Cit., pg. 96.

Additionally, on the evidence presented by Plotinus himself, as we noted earlier,<sup>2</sup> even in the mystical union soul is still soul, Socrates is still Socrates. Nothing of real being is ever annulled and soul, even though it is the last hypostasis, is a real being and thus cannot be annihilated. Soul has to realize its unity in itself and with intellect, in love, in order to be prepared and fitted for the mystical union, but in that mystical union there must still be something of soul to continue its functions, to continue its creation and governance. On a practical level Plotinus himself is living proof of the continued existence of soul for he claimed to have achieved the union four times during the period of his lifetime.

It might be argued that to attribute a function such as loving to Intellect which in normal usage does not have soul is somewhat puzzling. We should remember that, for Plotinus, his two hypostases,  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  and soul, were alive; only the One was above life. Plotinus, like his predecessors, considered soul to be the life force and he placed soul and  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$  always together in the Divine Realm. Soul is in  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ , the lower is in the higher and, while soul may not always have this awareness, but must come to a realization of this truth, soul and

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2 See chapt. 2 pg. 37 and 4:3:5.

νοῦς are always intimately connected. With this in mind it is not so strange to say that a power such as loving could be attributed to intellect and that it is the higher of its two powers.<sup>3</sup>

We have, then, demonstrated and substantiated our thesis, "That Love is of great importance in the thought of Plotinus". There are, however, degrees of importance. In some instances love is of absolute importance but in others the importance is relative. Love is of absolute importance for the man of perfection as he makes the initial move from the realm of particulars towards the perfect life of intellection and as he achieves union with the One but, in the intermediate stages, love is of relative importance, for dialectic and reason too have a role. For soul love is of absolute importance as she contemplates νοῦς and creates the universe for it is through love, the eye of the soul, that she contemplates νοῦς. But, in her governance and administration of the universe, love is of relative importance, for other factors are involved; she governs and administers according to the λόγος or reason principles communicated to her by νοῦς. In the realm of νοῦς love is of absolute importance as it makes its upward movement to the One. Love is the higher of its two powers. It is through love that it sees the One (the One is not available to

3 See chapt. 2 gp. ff.

its other power) and it is through love that it is united with the One but, it is by its other power, intellection, that it intuitively knows itself. Here love is of relative importance. It is in the One that love is absolute. Here there are no other factors; the One is Love.

Naturally the term love is used in several different senses throughout the writings of Plotinus, but all are interrelated. Basically there are two levels of love, the lower  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which is a love which desires and seeks and the Divine  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which rests tranquilly. The lower love operates on the level of soul and seeks and strives motivating and propelling soul as it seeks the perfect life. As soul progresses through the purifications, becoming increasingly detached from the senses and the phenomenal, the love also becomes more and more refined and purified, until it becomes the love of the philosopher, the creative intellectual love which seeks the virtue of wisdom through the practise of dialectic. It is still the love which desires and searches, but it is the love which now seeks to perfect the virtue of wisdom and to reach the perfect life.

Once the perfect life is reached and soul has reached the peak of the Intellectual Realm, it has come as far as striving and seeking can come. The striving

love which brought it thus far now changes its character and becomes the Divine Love, the Divine  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which is now a reverence, a joy, almost a worship.<sup>a</sup> This is the loving which is the higher power of  $\nu\omicron\tau\iota\varsigma$ . This is the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which is akin to the  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  which the One is. This is the "like which will know like" in the mystical union. Thus, although love is used in several different senses in the writings of Plotinus, they are all intimately connected for, as soul proceeds on its upward path to the perfect life becoming increasingly unified as it does so, so the loves are transformed one into the other until the virtue of wisdom, the perfect life of intellection, is reached and the love has been transformed into the Divine  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$ . But we are now faced with further questions. What is the relationship between  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  and  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  in Plotinian thought? We have offered a possible explanation for the use of  $\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$  in Ennead 6:8:16 but only a meticulous and detailed examination of the Greek text of the Enneads could shed light on this relationship, an undertaking outside the scope of this paper.

Similarly in order to gain a deeper understanding of the true meaning of Love in Plotinian thought we should study it against the background of writings of Plato and St. Augustine. It has been claimed that Plotinus considered himself a true Platonist explicating

the works of his master. But there are differences. Where, then, and how far has he progressed beyond Plato and differed in his treatment of Love? Does love have a vastly different meaning for Plotinus? And finally, it is said that Platonism, and Plotinus in particular, had a great influence on Christianity. Certainly their influence on St. Augustine was great and yet he was dissatisfied. Although he "had been set by them towards the search for a truth that is incorporeal,....",<sup>2</sup> he found something lacking for "Their pages show nothing of the face of that love....."<sup>3</sup>. What is "that love" and how does it differ from Plotinian Love?

These then are some of the questions which arise but, reluctantly, we must leave them for future consideration and study.

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2 St. Augustine op. cit. Bk. 7 XX pg. 152.

3 Ibid. Bk. 7 XXI pg. 154.

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All passages quoted are from the McKenna translation unless otherwise stated.